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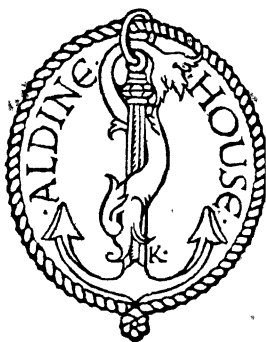
MARY SHELLEY

*From a painting by R. Rothwell in the National Portrait Gallery*

THE LIFE *of*  
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

AS COMPRISED IN *THE LIFE OF SHELLEY*  
BY THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG • *THE*  
*RECOLLECTIONS OF SHELLEY & BYRON*  
BY EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY • *MEMOIRS*  
*OF SHELLEY* BY THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY HUMBERT WOLFE  
FULLY ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHTEEN PEN AND  
INK DRAWINGS BY G. E. CHAMBERS AND SIX-  
TEEN PHOTOGRAVURE PORTRAITS AND VIEWS



VOLUME TWO

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## CONTENTS OF VOL. II

	PAGE
THE LIFE OF SHELLEY. BY THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG .	I-158
Chapter XXIII . . . . .	I
Chapter XXIV . . . . .	58
Chapter XXV . . . . .	68
Chapter XXVI . . . . .	79
Chapter XXVII . . . . .	92
Chapter XXVIII . . . . .	110
Chapter XXIX . . . . .	123
Chapter XXX . . . . .	138
RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LAST DAYS OF SHELLEY AND BYRON. BY EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY . . .	159-301
MEMOIRS OF SHELLEY BY THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK	303-365
LETTERS OF SHELLEY TO PEACOCK . . . . .	366-463
INDEX . . . . .	465

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## CONTENTS OF VOL. I

INTRODUCTION BY HUMBERT WOLFE . . . . .	vii
THE LIFE OF SHELLEY. BY THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG .	I
Bibliography . . . . .	2
Dedication . . . . .	3
Preface . . . . .	5
Chapters I-XXII . . . . .	19-415



# ILLUSTRATIONS IN PHOTOGRAVURE

MARY SHELLEY . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
From a painting by R. Rothwell in the National Portrait Gallery . . . . .	
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH . . . . .	<i>facing page 66</i>
From a print in the British Museum	
SHELLEY'S HOUSE AT BISHOPGATE, WINDSOR PARK	„ 105
Photo by G. E. Chambers	
JOHN KEATS . . . . .	„ 120
From the death mask in the National Portrait Gallery	
EDWARD JOHN TRELAUNY . . . . .	„ 168
From a drawing by D. Lucas in the British Museum	
CAPTAIN E. E. WILLIAMS . . . . .	„ 184
From a drawing by himself, recovered from the wreck of the <i>Don Juan</i> . In the British Museum	
THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK . . . . .	„ 311
CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN . . . . .	„ 326
From a miniature by William Dunlop, in the possession of Mr H. L. Pratt of New York, U.S.A.	

# ILLUSTRATIONS IN THE TEXT

THE BAY OF LERICI . . . . .	<i>facing page 240</i>
THE THAMES AT LECHLADE . . . . .	„ 340
TRIUMPHAL ARCH OF AUGUSTUS AT SUSA . . . . .	„ 388
VILLA PLINIANA, LAKE COMO . . . . .	„ 392
THE DOGE'S PALACE, VENICE . . . . .	„ 400
LEANING TOWERS AT BOLOGNA . . . . .	„ 410
ROMAN BRIDGE AT RIMINI . . . . .	„ 411
THE CASTLE AT SPOLETO . . . . .	„ 412
TEMPLE OF CERES AT PESTO . . . . .	„ 428
RELIEF ON THE ARCH OF TITUS, ROME . . . . .	„ 438





## CHAPTER XXIII

A DAY or two after my return to London, I received a letter from Dublin, and, after a like brief interval, another letter from the same place, and presently afterwards a short scrawl, without a date, announcing the arrival of my friends in town, at the house of Harriet's father. There appeared to have been a misunderstanding on both sides, and at all hands, but how it arose I could never comprehend at the time; and it would be vain indeed to attempt now to discover its source.

I found Bysshe and Harriet at an hotel in the West End: they were both well, and in good spirits; the lady was as bright, blooming, and placid as ever. They expressed much regret at my fruitless expedition, and most kindly condoled with me. I had made a long and energetic, although not an agreeable journey; nevertheless, there is a certain pleasure in energy and exertion; and I had enjoyed the advantage of seeing something of Wales, and much of Dublin; so, being reconciled to my lot, I was in a condition to act as a comforter towards them. They complained bitterly of the fatigue, expense, and hideous improbity of their long and barbarous course. Their wearied souls were brimful of the recollections of discomfort and miseries endured at Killarney; where, that they might be more thoroughly wretched, they had occupied a cottage situated upon an island in the lake. I write hesitatingly, for I never saw Killarney myself, or visited the county of Kerry; and their descriptions were not graphic, or even precise. The climate is mild, but the weather rainy and stormy; beyond belief and conception stormy.

Bysshe discoursed with animation and eloquent astonishment of the perilous navigation of the lakes; of sudden gusts and treacherous whirlwinds. How vessels were swamped and sunk in a moment; and he related with implicit faith tales savouring somewhat of Milesian exaggeration and credulity. How a boat had sometimes been caught up out of the water by a storm, carried bodily on shore, and deposited at a distance from the margin of the lake.

I could not make out why they had gone a second time to

Ireland; there was no political object as before; in truth, they did not know the reason themselves, and could not therefore inform me. Something was said about its being a change: it would have been a change to have gone to Nova Zembla, but hardly a more prudent or pleasant one. It might well be, that some glowing description of a beautiful locality from the lips, or in the pages, of a picturesque tourist caught the vivid imagination of the Divine Poet, and determined him on the instant to seek, forgetful of all other considerations and of every previous subsisting engagement, a perpetual asylum in a terrestrial paradise; to betake himself, as fast as post-horses or the mail coach could convey him, to the south-western corner of Ireland, that he might settle at Killarney 'for ever'. If the irresistible delusion was sudden, it was as suddenly dispelled, for certainly the spell was broken, the fascination was at an end; he had awakened completely from his dream of fairyland.

He had taken, or sent, a considerable number of books to the happy cottage on the blissful lake; many useful volumes collected in the solitude of Tanyrallt, and for which he had so earnestly written to his correspondent in London. When he started off hastily to overtake me in Dublin, or to join me in London, he had left Eliza in charge of his library. He was evidently weary of angelic guardianship, and exulted with a malicious pleasure that he had fairly planted her at last. He made no secret of his satisfaction, but often gave vent to his feelings with his accustomed frankness and energy. The good Harriet smiled in silence, and looked very sly; she did not dare to express her joy, if she really rejoiced at the absence of her affectionate and tiresome sister, by uttering treasons against her liege lady, the defender of her nerves. The deliverance was of brief duration—surprisingly brief, for in an incredibly short space of time Eliza reappeared and resumed her sovereign functions. They remained for some time at hotels, and during this period Eliza was with them, mute, smiling, and languishing as before. Whether she lived constantly with them I was not exactly informed; it seemed rather, that she went and came in a hushed, mystical manner. However, she was often present when I visited them, but retired frequently to her bedroom, probably to brush her hair assiduously as of old. Whenever she joined us she displayed the same painful interest in Harriet's nerves; their condition was authoritatively pronounced to be shattered and deplorable; and when she deigned to wonder at anything, she wondered what Miss Warne would say. On some days she

was unquestionably absent; and then, perhaps, she had gone to hold a chaste conference with her virgin friend respecting the nervous system, and actually to hear what the oracle said.

Harriet gave visible promise of being about to provide an heir for an ancient and illustrious house and, like all little women, she looked very large upon the occasion. She was in excellent voice, and fonder than ever of reading aloud; she promptly seized every opportunity of indulging her taste: she took up the first book that came to hand as soon as I entered the room, and the reading commenced. Sir William Drummond's *Academatical Questions*, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, some of Bishop Berkeley's works, Southey's *Chronicle of the Cid*, had taken the place of *Telemachus*, *Belisarius*, Volney's *Ruins*, and the other works, which she had formerly read to me. Whenever Eliza made a descent upon us silence was immediately proclaimed, and the book was carried away.

'Dearest Harriet, what are you about? Only consider the state of your poor nerves! Think of your condition! You are killing yourself as fast as you can; you are, indeed, dear! Gracious heaven! What would Miss Warne say?'

I dined with my young friends one day at an hotel in Dover Street. Bysshe was to go somewhere with all haste—a common occurrence with him—to perform, or to procure, something mysterious and prodigious. He could hardly be prevailed upon to take his dinner; he restrained his impatience until our meal was finished, and whilst the waiter was removing the cloth, he sprang on his feet, snatched up his hat and ran away, leaving me alone with Harriet. We sat and conversed for a while; she probably was wishing for the moment, when with a decent and proper regard for the paramount duty of digestion, she might begin to read aloud.

Before the desired moment came, Dr. S. was announced, and a quiet Quaker physician quickly entered the room, his hat upon his head, and a bland smile upon his countenance. I rose instantly to depart, but the doctor seized my arm, and made me sit down again. I felt uneasy, but believing that he took me for the husband of the lady whom he attended, I was about to inform him that I was not, when Harriet interposed:

'You need not go away! Dr. S. does not desire it, I am sure. He rather wishes you to stay!'

My position seemed delicate and distressing, but it was not so. The doctor seated himself over against his blooming young patient, and rather near to her, looking at her fixedly;

the bland smile was still upon his countenance, and the ample hat was still upon his head. Nothing was said, either by the lady or by her dumb physician.

Twice or thrice, the latter murmured softly and inarticulately.

The mute consultation continued about ten minutes, and terminated abruptly. When he had satiated his eyes, and satisfied the demands of science by gazing silently, Dr. S. started suddenly from his chair, as if something had stung him behind, and with a celerity hardly natural in a Quaker, quitted the room, carefully closing the door after him. Harriet appeared to be relieved at being delivered from his silent, searching eye.

'Well! You see there was no necessity for your going away; not the least in the world. You might very well stay! It was Bysshe's wish that Dr. S. should see me, and he has seen me!'

Dr. John S. was a very distinguished member of the Society of Friends; he was eminent as a botanist, and eminent likewise as a ladies' physician. The speechless individuals of the vegetable kingdom did not require him to talk to them; he might arrange them, and distinguish their several species in the most profound silence. But the success of so taciturn a doctor with animated nature, with natures very animated, with patients who love to speak and to be spoken to, especially on those interesting occasions, to which his extensive practice was chiefly directed, was certainly remarkable. I have been told that he would attend a female through the whole affair without once uttering a single word, even in a protracted and difficult case. It was wonderful how the charming, prattling sex could endure such mute ministrations; how a nice talkative young lady could ever bear to be put, not chattily to bed, but drily, like a specimen of a woman, into a herbarium, or *hortus siccus*; and as though, in truth, she was not more than many flowers! I have sometimes thought that his numerous patients imagined that the doctor must speak at last; that some day or other, sooner or later, he would say something; and then, what in the world would it be? And that the hope of being the fortunate holder of the prize ticket consoled them for his obstinate silence, and supported them under it. To hear eventually the secret of secrets would be a full compensation for the pains and perils of childbirth; for all the preceding apprehensions and inconveniences; for all succeeding sufferings and maladies; for a tedious confinement; for the sorrows of suckling; for blighted hopes and bitter bereavements; nay, even for the attendance of a dumb accoucheur! Woman is Nature's masterpiece, as well as that of Aristotle;

and when the very observing doctor's close and varied examination of strange and astonishing things, continued moreover without intermission for many years, should transpire at last, being clothed in appropriate language, the full and final disclosure of the sleek, sly, silent Quaker would at once atone for a whole life of the strictest reticence!

Dr. John S. doubtless made his observations on the lovely Harriet, but he did not communicate them. During the sole interview I ever had with our valued friend, not one drop of the grand secret oozed out.

Shelley continued to reside for some weeks at hotels; some persons blamed such a course as imprudent, and moreover as being expensive, but his motives were discreet and rational. Next August he would be of age. It was confidently asserted, and generally believed, that his father would then come to a satisfactory and proper arrangement. It was thought that an hotel was more convenient for negotiations than lodgings. His father, it was said, would pay his debts, of which the amount was inconsiderable, and make him a moderate, permanent, and suitable allowance.

For some two years I had seen but little of Bysshe, but from this epoch it was my good fortune to see a great deal of him, and to enjoy, off and on, much of the unappreciable pleasure and advantage of his most precious society and familiar and friendly intercourse. Having consumed many valuable hours in the dull diplomacy of his father's agents, and finding the residence at an hotel, a place where the muses do not haunt, unfavourable to study, and to assembling a goodly fellowship of ancient books round him, he took lodgings in Half-Moon Street. I went one day, by invitation, to dine with him there, and on arriving I found Harriet alone.

'Bysshe called on the Duke of Norfolk this morning, who asked him to dinner, and it would have been improper to have refused. He has just gone, but he will come to us as soon as he can get away.'

Harriet and myself dined together, and had tea; and after tea Harriet was reading aloud to me, as she was wont to do. Her reading was abruptly put an end to by vehement and well-known rapping; Shelley came tumbling upstairs, with a mighty sound, treading upon his nose, as I accused him of doing, rushed into the room, and throwing off his neckcloth, according to custom, stood staring around for some moments, as wondering why he had been in such a hurry. He informed us that there

was a large party of men at Norfolk House; he sat near the bottom of the table, and the Earl of Oxford sat next to him. After dinner the earl said to him:

‘Pray, who is that very strange old man at the top of the table, sitting next to his Grace, who talks so much, so loudly, and in so extraordinary a manner, and all about himself?’

‘He is my father, and he is a very strange old man indeed! The earl said no more on that head, but we continued to chat together, and he walked with me from St. James’s Square. I have just left him at the door.’

Feelings of sympathy and antipathy are various and manifest. Bysshe appeared to be pleased with the Earl of Oxford, because he disliked his father. I did not know the earl, but I was so fortunate as to meet his lovely and fashionable countess occasionally, and I was soon able to discover that we had one point of sympathy and strong common feeling—an intense abhorrence of bores.

The first time I met this admired lady was at a conference of wise men and wise women—a conversation party; the term, an evening’s work, *soirée*, was not then in use. Some philosophers were discussing at length, and in a sufficiently tiresome manner, about the locality of the Garden of Eden; concerning the true situation of the terrestrial Paradise. Lady Oxford plainly showed her sense of extreme weariness by gaping and yawning aloud, quite unreservedly, as she would sometimes do, like one who was deemed above ordinances. When there was a pause in the conversation, being encouraged, perhaps, by the lady’s oscitancy, I ventured to say:

‘I believe I know exactly where Paradise is situated.’

‘Where?’ asked someone shortly, and in a tone which seemed to imply: ‘what can you know about the matter?’

I answered: ‘It is certainly in Cranbourne Alley; for there so many pretty faces may be seen flitting about the bonnet shops on a fine day, that it is impossible to believe Paradise can be anywhere else’. The philosophers appeared to be disgusted at my impertinences, but the lovely countess took me by the hand and always treated me with much kindness.

Another evening the whole party was sentimental, and each person present, in turn, pathetically selected some favoured spot in which it would be sweet to be buried. Some romantic churchyard in Wales was chosen, or a secluded nook in the district of the English Lakes. The church was to be small, old, overgrown with moss, and shaded with ivy. There were to be

ancient trees, yews in particular, and nightingales were to sing in them. There must be a crystal brook near at hand, flowing with a gentle murmur—a babbling brook. The ground must not be moist and marshy, nor the situation low, but light, sandy soil, on a moderate acclivity, was preferred; for to lie dry is thought comfortable, even after death.

‘You have not told us, sir, where you would like to be buried,’ the countess said to me, although she had not fixed upon her own sepulchre. ‘You are too young to have thought much about it. Perhaps you have not made up your mind?’

‘I have thought about it; I have made up my mind, quite.’

‘Where is it to be, then, will you tell us?’

‘Certainly. For my part, I should choose to be buried under the kerbstone, before the door of the most fashionable milliner in London; it would be no mean consolation to know that the prettiest feet and ankles in the world were stepping backwards and forwards into and out of carriages, all day long, over my head.’ In those days we had feet and ankles; we showed them freely, and never supposed that there was any harm in it. We were naked, it is true, but being innocent, we were not ashamed; indeed, we did not even know that we were naked. In those days, also, there was a visible, sensible difference, a marked diversity, in the forms of females; now all are made alike, and in the similitude of champagne bottles; and as for feet and ankles, for anything that appears to the contrary, ladies nowadays are moved about upon castors, like easy-chairs and tables.

The latter sally was not more displeasing than the former one; but I am not writing the history of my own life and times, but the biography of a Divine Poet, to the illustration of whose remarkable character alone every word should tend. In the year 1810 I went home for the long vacation, travelling to the North of England on the outside of coaches. The first of these was a Birmingham coach, which stopped to breakfast at Stratford-on-Avon, where I had never been before. I willingly forfeited my breakfast that I might see Shakespeare’s house. I saw it; and the church being open, I saw the tomb also, and the celebrated bust, with its high forehead; and by hard running I got back to the coach just in time to regain my airy seat.

My fellow collegians and travelling companions laughed at my enthusiasm, a frame of mind in little favour at that time in our ancient university.

‘How did you like your breakfast?’

I got nothing to eat until dinner at Birmingham!

‘You will surely be a poet yourself!’

I am not a poet; but I am the biographer of a Divine Poet, whose acquaintance I had the good fortune to make on my return to Oxford in the following October. It may be, that familiarity with an illustrious poet must always be purchased by some sacrifices; by the loss of a breakfast at the least!

Bysshe, as has been asserted already, and will be declared again and again, was invariably an especial favourite of the fair sex; he was cherished as the apple of beauty’s eye; he was often called by names of endearment, as Ariel, Oberon, and spoken of by the ladies of his acquaintance as the Elfin King, the King of Faery, and under other affectionate titles. Elegant society was deemed to be his proper element, to adorn which appeared to be his natural vocation; to bring him into it, and to keep him in it, was the anxious care of several amiable and charming creatures at the present crisis of his life. It was thought desirable to procure for him an introduction to the Countess of Oxford, in order that her wise and gentle influence might perchance make him less unlike other people, and bring about a certain reasonable compliance with received usages. With this view he was mentioned to her by several of his female friends, and she was well disposed towards him, greatly interested in him, and inclined to admit him amongst her acquaintances. She asked many questions concerning the young poet, and spoke of him, not merely with curiosity, but with kindness and regard. These benevolent intentions did not lead to any practical results; they were frustrated chiefly by the departure from England of this distinguished lady, who went with her family to reside at Cagliari.

John Horne Tooke was at this time the oracle of the liberal section of literary society; his testimony was cited in favour of the ingenious countess. Discoursing one day of learned ladies and women of talent, the Philosopher of Wimbledon, as he was sometimes styled, declared that he had never known a woman of talent. The best of them, he said, are mere parrots; they repeat what they have heard, but without understanding it: if what they repeat happens to be clever, although it is not their own, and if it be really clever, it never is, they obtain credit for a degree of cleverness to which they are not entitled. But when I say I never met with a woman of real talent I must, in justice, make one exception, and that is Lady Oxford. He then cited some of the excepted lady’s smart sayings, which he proved to be original and spontaneous; and demonstrated that they could



not possibly have been learned by rote. I have forgotten these proofs and instances; but I remember that I inquired with some solicitude, whether the cynic, for such surely he must be accounted, had ever been in company with the daughter of Necker? but I could not make out how that was. Whether the morose sentence included the most celebrated Blue of the age, or perhaps of any age, amongst the hen parrots; whether Corinna herself was but a talking bird, a 'Blue bird!' Lively, agreeable, and good-natured conversations I well recollect; but no profound observations—nothing likely to throw into the shade the Proverbs of Solomon, or the Precepts of the Seven Wise Men of Greece.

The pompous Dr. Parr at one period puffed this distinguished lady most vigorously; but his judgment was less sober, his evidence less truthful and worthy to be relied on, than the decision of the author of *Winged Words*! Notwithstanding all his efforts, the Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr could not get himself made a bishop: in order, therefore, to spite the more fortunate Lords Spiritual and their archdeacons, he took it into his head to wear the cassock, which he maintained is, according to the canons, the proper dress of a priest. It is also generally worn at the two universities, but never there without the gown, as he wore it: moreover, the pushing priest, in his canonical costume, had the satisfaction, such as it was, of passing for a bishop in the streets, and with strangers. The doctor was in full flower at that time—covered with bloom, indeed; puffing himself, and being puffed, parading and praising himself at every point of the compass. The singularity of his clerical vesture attracted much observation and continual criticism: it might be in accordance with the canons of the church, of which nobody knew anything, but it was contrary to long-established usage, and with this all the world was acquainted.

The countess openly threatened to ask him why he, alone of priests, wore the proper and peculiar dress of priesthood; but she was assured that it was a delicate inquiry, a sore point, and he must not be spoken to on the subject. However, she had betted five guineas, it was reported, that she would publicly ask him why he wore the cassock. Despising all friendly cautions, and in defiance of warnings and admonitions, she boldly persevered in her contumacious design.

'Pray, Dr. Parr, how long have you taken to wear petticoats?' she said to him one day at a large dinner party.

There was no answer, and the company laughed; and

thereupon the audacious lady triumphantly repeated the question in a louder voice.

‘Ever since your ladyship has taken to wear the breeches!’

She won her bet, certainly; but she earned her five guineas!

Whether this anecdote be strictly true, I know not: it was current at the time, and pretty generally credited: if it be not true, it is at least not ill found.

With respect to the famous cassock I not only saw it several times, but I once wore it myself for an hour or more—a distinction which few persons can boast.

A clever artist, with whom I had some acquaintance, was employed to take a likeness of Sam Parr. He had already made considerable progress in his work; what he had done was most satisfactory to himself, to the doctor, and to his numerous friends; and he was extremely anxious to complete the portrait with equal success.

‘The doctor is not a good sitter: he is very restless, and unless he has somebody to talk to him and amuse him, I cannot keep him quiet; and then I do not get on with my work so well as I desire. I am unable to converse with him myself. Will you come and talk to him at his next sitting? You will do me a great favour—a real kindness!’

The next sitting had been fixed for the following Sunday, for the doctor’s stay in town was limited. I went to breakfast with the painter.

‘The reverend doctor has promised to sit this morning for two or three hours, during the time of divine service. You must not tell at what time he sat, so mighty a pillar of the Church would not like that it should be known; indeed, he charged me particularly not to mention it to anybody; but he will not mind you, I am sure!’

After breakfast the bells struck up, calling the sheep together into the fold; the good shepherd came to us punctually. The immortal editor of the immortal *Bellendenus* was conducted straight to the painting room, and we joined him there immediately. He was not at all displeased at seeing me, but shook hands cordially, and was in high good humour; and, to say the truth, he always appeared to me to be a thoroughly good-natured, kind-hearted old man. He pointed out the fire in the short clay pipe held in the hand, and extolled the felicity with which the burning tobacco was represented, enlarging greatly upon that theme. The artist smiled.

‘That is not a very difficult feat of art, I believe?’

‘Not at all,’ said the painter; ‘but what do you think of the likeness?’

‘It is admirable—perfect!’

And so in very truth it was; absurdly, ridiculously like, and yet a pleasing picture. The visage was required to be tauriform—as much like a bull as possible, only without horns, and in that respect, therefore, unlike Moses or Bacchus, or a bull, and like the doctor.

The learned sitter arrayed himself in his canonicals, mounted the raised chair, was placed in proper attitude and light, and the work of imitation duly advanced.

It was easy to talk with Dr. Parr, for he loved to have all the talk to himself, and to lay down the law: however, he desired to be understood, and he expected to meet with attention; and, indeed, his conversation deserved it. His discourse was always worth listening to, and instructive, more or less: it cannot be denied that, for good taste, he spoke too much of himself. Having ascertained from his watch that people must be coming out of church, he took off his gown and departed suddenly, and somewhat sooner than was expected.

I was requested to take his place for a little while, and accordingly I put on the cassock that had been sent to be worn by the painter’s lay figure; the light fell at that moment, it was said, in an agreeable manner upon the drapery about the knees; the effect ought not to be lost, for, in the language consecrated to art, it was rich and happy.

The worthy and most laborious artist told me, whilst I was sitting in proper priestly costume as proxy for a reverend priest, that the great Sir Joshua Reynolds had said, that no painter had ever attained to eminence, who looked upon Sunday as a holiday; and that, for his part, he always worked particularly hard on that day. He then discoursed of Dr. Parr with admiration, and with admiration still more profound of my friend Shelley; how much he desired that these two wonderful men should meet; how much he wished to be present at their meeting, and to listen to their exquisite conversation! I have heard in other quarters of the project of bringing the old Grecian and the young poet into personal communication; but it was not a promising one.

Sam Parr’s delight was to dogmatize—to have everything entirely his own way; he had no relish for any companion who doubted his absolute infallibility. Besides, a Whig divine is placed in a very critical position, between two fires; he has to

try to make his way, to creep to the paradise of a bishopric—a long and narrow bridge, narrow as the edge of a razor; he must not compromise his orthodoxy on the one hand, or his liberality on the other. Bysshe, on his side, had no inclination for the society of a pedagogue; an invitation to come and converse familiarly with a schoolmaster, how illustrious soever, would appear too like a summons to return to Eton, and have an agreeable chat with old Keate, whom his soul abhorred; too like bidding him to cross the great gulf of eternal separation, and to commune again with the Big Wigs of Oxford, for whom he very naturally had conceived an intense hatred, mingled with well-merited and unmitigated contempt. And so the friendly conference with the Reverend Doctor Samuel Parr never came off!

In London Bysshe found books and society, and he appeared to rejoice in being delivered from the long-endured, intolerable loneliness of Wales: the good Harriet also rejoiced, and was bright, blooming, calm, and composed, as heretofore; but she had not renounced her eternal purpose of suicide; and she still discoursed of some scheme of self-destruction, as coolly as another lady would arrange a visit to an exhibition or a theatre. She told me sometimes that she was very unhappy, but she never said why; and in particular, she told me frequently, as she had told me formerly, that she had been very unhappy at school, and often intended to kill herself. I asked her again and again the cause of her unhappiness, but she did not know it. It certainly appeared to be mere talk, and I found a festivity in it; it became jolly, as it were, to laugh at her suicidal schemes, and the solemnity with which she unfolded them: with this she was now and then a little offended. 'Mamma is going to have some walnuts pickled next week,' a little girl once said to me, a little boy; and she added, with a grave look and an air of quiet resolution, 'and mamma says she is quite determined!' So poor Harriet was quite determined, and did not choose to be laughed out of it, being displeased with my apologue of the walnuts.

In this strange world one comes across strange people sometimes, and finds strange kinds of industry, especially when a man lays himself out for strange characters. Dining one day at an hotel in London with Bysshe and Harriet, I met a poor poet there, whose acquaintance they had just made—how, I know not; I think, through some advertisement in a newspaper. Shelley introduced me to him, and grimly whispered that he

was going to kill himself. 'Very well!' 'Immediately!' he added. 'With all my heart!' The professor of suicide, it must be admitted, had rather a melancholy look. He was pale, cadaverous, and he discoursed during dinner in a grave, pedantic manner, of his inflexible resolution to commit suicide, as it seemed, instantly; and he talked much, and with due solemnity, of Otho—of the Otho of Tacitus—until dinner was over. Otho, he said, was his favourite—his hero! However, Otho ate his salmon and lobster sauce, and whatever else was put before him, largely and voraciously, and with a prodigious relish; took his wine very freely, and then a long nap; and finally departed, without having become a felon of himself. When he had taken his leave, Harriet told me with great glee: 'The gentleman is going to kill himself!' 'Really!' 'Directly; is not that quite delightful?' 'Quite!' 'I should not wonder if he is doing it now!' I did not wish to put her out of conceit with this notion, but I should have wondered much if he had been doing anything of the kind. I saw him twice or thrice, there and thereabouts; his talk was ever in the same self-murderous vein; so confidently did he speak, so urgent was the necessity, that on leaving the room for five minutes one might expect to return and find him in a pool of blood; but no, the calamity never happened; it was plain that suicide was only his stock-in-trade. All people laughed at him, except Harriet, whose sympathies were excited at first; but after a short time, even she got tired of him; or possibly she was jealous of Otho's superior confidence of assertion touching impending self-destruction. What ultimately became of the fellow I know not; I never heard that he cut his throat; perhaps he hit upon some other mode of getting a dinner, when this dodge was seen through.

Poor Shelley was too often taken possession of and kept in a sort of imprisonment, or duress, in the society of persons in every respect unworthy of him, for their own sordid and selfish purposes; the plunderers taking care, meanwhile, that the captive and victim should see as little of his old friends as possible. One of the many inconveniences of being distinguished is, that every impudent pretender thinks he has a right to introduce and push himself, as an admirer of talent and genius, being at once a devoted worshipper, and a person admirably fitted to be kicked out of the room. Bysshe was cruelly pestered by impertinent intruders, and he felt the annoyance very sensibly; he used sometimes to turn them over to me; this was not pleasant for either party. But, however coolly such fellows might be

treated, they would seldom go away the sooner; nothing, in short, but the free and liberal use of a pitchfork or flail, would have delivered us from the unwelcome company.

If the line of life which the young poet had taken subjected him to many disagreeable intrusions, and brought him frequently in contact with odious and pernicious people, on the other hand, it was the means of introducing him to some pleasant and clever persons, from whose society he derived much delight, and no small profit. Such intercourse exercised a powerful influence on his character and conduct. I will select a few instances, treating the subject somewhat discursively, as a miscellaneous matter. He spoke with enthusiasm of a charming family, whose acquaintance he had lately made, in what manner I do not remember, and he promised to introduce me to them, declaring that I should be as much taken with them as he was himself. He informed me soon afterwards that he had spoken of me to them, that they desired to see me, and the next day he would take me to dine with them. The next day—it was a Sunday, in the summer—we took a walk together, wandering about, as usual, for a long time without plan or purpose. About five o'clock Bysshe stopped suddenly at the door of a house in a fashionable street, ascended the steps hastily, and delivered one of his superb bravura knocks.

‘What are we going to do here?’

‘It is here we dine.’

He placed me before him, that I might enter first, as the stranger; the door was thrown wide open, and a strange spectacle presented itself. There were five naked figures in the passage advancing rapidly to meet us. The first was a boy of twelve years, the last a little girl of five; the other three children, the two eldest of them being girls, were of intermediate ages, between the two extremes. As soon as they saw me they uttered a piercing cry, turned round, and ran wildly upstairs, screaming aloud. The stairs presented the appearance of Jacob's Ladder, with the angels ascending it, except that they had no wings, and they moved faster, and made more noise than the ordinary representations of the Patriarch's vision indicate. From the window of the nursery at the top of the house the children had seen the beloved Shelley—had scampered down-stairs in single file to welcome him; me, the killjoy, they had not observed.

I was presented to a truly elegant family, and I found everything in the best taste, and was highly gratified with my

reception, and with the estimable acquisition to the number of my friends. Nothing was said about the first strange salutation, nor did I venture to inquire what it signified. After dinner, Bysshe asked why the children did not come into the room to the dessert as usual. The lady of the house coloured slightly, and said Shelley should see them by and by, in the nursery, but they did not dare to show themselves in the dining-room. They were all too much ashamed at having been seen, as they were, so unexpectedly, by a stranger!

Nothing more transpired to clear up the mystery of their nudity. At subsequent visits the whole system was unfolded.

I am quite unable to do justice to the theory of philosophical nakedness. I can only recall a very few things of many which I heard on that head. There was to be soon a return to nature, it was believed—to the natural and pristine state of innocence, in which we are taught, by the highest authority, that human beings were naked.

In order to prepare mankind for the happy impending restoration of perfect and universal nudity, children ought to be accustomed at an early age to be, at least occasionally, naked. It was alleged, moreover, that the practice of stripping young persons sometimes is eminently conducive to their health, to strength of body, symmetry, beauty, and to morality, and virtue; and that even grown persons may derive much benefit from remaining some hours, in mild weather, without their clothes. It was most manifest that the children liked to nakedize—such was the term of art—exceedingly; but it was something new and different from the ordinary routine of jackets, trousers, and petticoats; in a word, it was a change. It was conceded as a privilege and favour, and whilst they remained naked they were allowed—a glorious concession to a child, to make as much noise as they pleased. These young innocents were remarkably healthy, happy, beautiful, and intelligent; whether they would have been less so if they had always worn their clothes like other children, it is not easy to determine. As far as we can learn, nations who are habitually naked are not more healthy, happy, handsome, and virtuous, than people who are constantly clothed from head to foot. The mistress of the family assured us that she frequently remained for hours without her clothes, and derived much advantage from the complete exposure to the air. She never seemed to have much the matter with her; and in imaginative persons fancy sways their feelings and convictions. 'I rose early this morning, and having locked myself into my

dressing-room, or undressing-room, I remained for three hours, stark naked. I am all the better for it, I assure you; I always am. I feel so innocent during the rest of the day!' Impertinent persons would sometimes laugh at her frank avowal of superior innocence. Never was there a more modest, a more virtuous lady; never was there less cause for malicious laughter; and her feelings are perhaps intelligible enough. Any one who begins the day by remaining stark naked for three or four hours in the early morning, closely shut up, and of necessity alone, is compelled, in order to pass the time, to be steadily employed during the entire period of seclusion, in reading, writing, drawing, working—to persevere in the performance of some engrossing duty. A day commenced in so useful and creditable a manner cannot fail to bring with it impressions of self-satisfaction and innocence. I gained some credit by communicating that I had sometimes nakedized, under the authority and by the advice of the celebrated Dr. Franklin, who wrote with earnestness in commendation of air-baths, for so he called and esteemed the remaining naked for some hours in the early morning. He discourses at length about the salubrious influence of the air on the bare skin; of this I do not pretend to judge. When I was young I was surprisingly strong and healthy; air-bathing unquestionably never did me any harm, nor, as far as I could discover, any good; but I was so well that it must have been a wonderful air and a wonderful bath indeed that could have made me better than I then was. This practice, like all other practices, had its peculiar conveniences and inconveniences. To carry it into effect it is necessary to rise betimes, for in the first morning alone a person is seldom wanted, and the bath is not liable to be interrupted—a most salutary condition. The air-bather, so long as he remains in the bath, is constrained to employ himself, to sit reading, or writing, with closed doors. To quit my occupation without quitting the bath was impossible. On the other hand, it prevented a healthy morning walk; it cut one off from intercourse with others; and it did not allow me to go forth on the spur of the occasion, and the suggestion of the moment, to do something that might be useful or expedient. Moreover, there is some danger of going out unawares, unconscious of nakedness, for by familiarity with the state of nature, and wrapped up in abstract study, one soon learns to forget the helpless and shameful condition. It is a prudent precaution, therefore, not only to lock the door, but also to put the key away in some place that may remind us, through artificial memory,



and the association of ideas, in seeking it, that our first parents were too fond of apples and of knowledge. The father of air-bathing, it is said, was once guilty of inadvertence in this respect. The doctor tells us that he pursued his morning studies in utter nakedness, with the most beneficial results, for many summers, but he does not tell us the anecdote which I will relate. The philosopher was never in affluence, and having once received a bill of exchange from England for a moderate amount from a debtor of doubtful character, he had sent it to the neighbouring town to be presented for acceptance, and he was most anxious to learn whether his English correspondent's paper had been duly honoured. A friend going to the town undertook to inquire, and to let him know. He came home too late to communicate with the doctor that night; but early the next morning Benjamin espied his friend's maidservant tripping quickly across the Green towards his house with a letter in her hand. The long habit of remaining for hours without his clothes, and his extreme solicitude as to the fate of the bill, overpowered his consciousness. When the girl came within a few yards of his door the venerable patriot eagerly rushed out, a second, or a third Adam, to meet her. She fled in terror, and ran screaming home.

'What is the matter? Did you see the doctor?'

'Oh! No! Poor old gentleman; we shall never see him again; he has been barbarously murdered, no doubt! The Indians got possession of the farther end of the village in the night; the chief is in the poor doctor's house, and as soon as he saw me he ran out, tomahawk in hand, to scalp me!'

To counteract absence of mind, and to obviate such unpleasant contingencies, it is prudent, as I soon discovered myself, and have already observed, not only to lock the door, but to adopt additional precautions. Females, it is notorious, have more presence of mind than we have; therefore the charming, enthusiastic lady, who sat for three hours at a time, at the dawn of day, cooling her unprejudiced mutton, might not be subject to the like precipitancy, and to incur the like peril. To rush naked into the street, that she might welcome a long absent friend, would be an unpleasant mistake before the Return to Nature and innocence had been duly proclaimed at Temple Bar by naked heralds: even the day before. Except on my first visit, the dear children never appeared naked before me; before Bysshe they often did. It is for his credit's sake that I state it. I was of the earth, earthy; he was of the heaven, heavenly; I

was a worldling; he had already returned to nature, or rather he had never quitted her. He was a pure spirit, in the divine likeness of the Archangel Gabriel; the peace-breathing, lily-bearing, Annunciator. Whether the charming lady might not, without tarnish or discredit, have appeared before him robed only in her innocence, as she was wont to sit during the early morning hours, I will not presume to determine; it is, at all events, certain that she never did so.

Much has been said and written by wise men and by foolish ones on the subject of going naked; it would not be to the purpose to repeat their arguments and conclusions, still less expedient would it be to discuss the matter anew; but looking at the question without regard to moral, physical, or intellectual amelioration, but simply with a view to personal comfort, I will merely remark that the practice would not be convenient or agreeable. Shelley was powerfully attracted by every scheme tending towards improvement, to ethical progress, and human perfectibility; and the attraction was more powerful in proportion as the scheme was novel, strange, and startling; but he was not tempted to accept—and it is extraordinary that he was not—the project of virtuous and philanthropic nudity. It is fortunate, indeed, that he did not put it in practice in his own person, his absence and aberration of mind being totally overpowering—

and being transported  
And rapt in secret studies,

he would probably have started off heedlessly some fine morning, and run through the streets of London, to a diplomatic conference with his father's bootless negotiators, or other appointment, the recollection of which had suddenly flashed across the mind of the naked student as the priests of old ran about Rome bare on the Lupercalia. Or peradventure the handsome young gymnosophist, being startled at his books by the sound of the meal-going bell, would have joined a party of female friends at the breakfast table, as wanting in all clothing, and as unconscious of the want as a new-born babe.

He thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated  
To closeness, and the bettering of his mind,

was eminently unqualified to engage in so slippery and perilous an innovation.

There have always been, off and on, a considerable number of people doing the stays movement. This part of female apparel

had many enemies at that period ; stays, it may be easily believed, found no favour with the advocates of nakedness. I heard much from them of the sin and danger of wearing stays, and I listened patiently to many a fierce, angry diatribe against them. I was once taken to a lecture on stays, to be delivered by a first-rate, scientific Blue. She inhabited a large and handsome old house in a dull street, and an old-fashioned, obsolete part of the town. Scene the first was the dining-room ; it had been fitted up as a lecture-room. The audience was pretty numerous, and, with the sole exception of myself, consisted exclusively of females. I asked my fair conductress, by whose side I was seated, if it was quite proper for me to remain ? She commanded me to stay. ' You are a friend of our sex, and perfectly free from prejudices ! ' The latter part of the compliment I sensibly felt that I did not deserve. On a large table was a green cloth, and on the cloth were plaster-casts, drawings, and engravings, and a rabbit with its chest cut open, so that the lungs appeared. The lady lecturess came forward, and after a profound courtesy and gentle murmurs of applause, she began to discourse fluently, earnestly, and rather agreeably ; with extreme solemnity—with the gravity, indeed, of many professors. She addressed herself first to the casts, and, laying her hands upon them, expounded at length what may be called the upper works of woman. She then directed our attention to the deceased rabbit, pointing to different portions of the lungs, and explaining, or attempting to explain, the whole economy of respiration. She proved likewise, exceedingly well, that stays on the body of a rabbit would interfere with and impede its movements, and would be inconvenient and uncomfortable. Bundles of stays of different kinds were handed to her ; these she successively applied to the plaster-casts, and demonstrated how grievously they offended against every principle of anatomical science ; launching forth into an animated invective against busks, which, whether they were of wood, of whalebone, or of steel, found no quarter. She then exhibited pictures of crooked shoulders, distorted spines, contracted chests, and manifold deformities, painful to behold. She assured us that all these calamities, and many others, were occasioned solely by the pernicious pressure of stays. The peroration was exceedingly impressive and authoritative ; she assured us, as if from revelation, that a benevolent Providence never intended the fairest of his creatures to be so strait-laced—to commit their captivating persons to devilish engines of torture and destruction.

The second scene was the drawing-room. The many had departed; a select party, the chosen few, had been invited to remain and take coffee. When I entered the room I was placed, for cause of honour, upon the sofa, after the foreign fashion; the lady of the house had resided much abroad, and presently she set herself down by my side. She said much in courteous phrase of the honour and pleasure, and so on, of my attendance.

'You heard my poor discourse, sir; through your kindness you heard it with attention. What do you really believe were the designs of Providence with respect to us females; do you think that we were ever intended to wear stays? Have I not fully demonstrated that we were not?'

'To say the truth, madam, I do not very well know how to answer you: with respect to women, I am not competent to decide; but I am fully convinced, and you demonstrated it completely, that Providence never meant that a buck rabbit should wear stays!'

'And indeed it was a buck; what a terrible oversight! That is much to be regretted on all accounts; it ought most unquestionably to have been a doe; it is a thousand pities!'

A long silence ensued; the poor lady was manifestly troubled about the sex of her anatomical subject.

When she had recovered herself, and conversation was resumed, it came out that Bysshe had promised faithfully to attend the lecture, but the traitor had faithlessly broken his engagement. His defection was deeply deplored. The lecturess spoke of him with animation and enthusiasm; if he would once declare himself distinctly on the great, the momentous question, the distinct declaration of so great and influential a mind would instantly and finally determine it. Not another pair of stays would ever be sold, made, or worn in Europe!

Coffee was served; I partook of it, it was excellent; and when the guests had all been supplied, the philosopheress took a cup herself. A china cup containing a yellow powder was brought to her; she took a teaspoonful of the powder, and stirred it into her coffee.

'Was it ginger, saffron, gold dust, the dust of the potable gold of the alchymists—what was it?' I ventured to inquire.

'No; it was flour of mustard. I once had the honour and happiness to see the Great Frederick of Prussia take coffee at Potsdam, and he put flour of mustard into his coffee, as I have just done; and therefore I have taken it thus ever since, in

memory of so illustrious a man. He was once in a campaign in Poland, in a rainy season, and a marshy country, when he was attacked grievously, dangerously, by diarrhœa; his ordinary medical attendants could not relieve him. "Was there no physician in the neighbourhood?" "Yes, a celebrated one, but he is a Jew, and your Majesty would not like to consult him." "Jew or Gentile, so that he can cure me, bring him here!" The Polish physician prescribed flour of mustard in coffee; the king took it immediately and freely, and the effect was rapid and beneficial. The Great Frederick was subject to such attacks, and therefore he persevered in using the remedy.'

'And are you subject to them?'

Her temperament appeared to be dry and adust.

'No! By no means! But it is only a due tribute of respect for the memory of so great a man, that I should always take my coffee as I once saw him take his!'

The whole soul of my ardent and imaginative young friend was inflamed at this period of his life, by a glowing desire to witness and to promote the improvement and progress of civil society. He had translated an essay, or treatise, of some French philosopher, on the Perfectibility of the Human Species; and he read his translation aloud to me, as well as the writings of other authors on the same fanciful subject. A state of things was fast approaching, we were assured, in which mankind, having become perfectly virtuous, the sanction of laws, as well as all binding contracts and agreements, would no longer be required. It would be fortunate and happy, indeed, if the accession of this complete change and entire amelioration were true, or even probable. A man might then lend ten or fifty thousand pounds to a friend, or even to any stranger, at four per cent, or on any other terms, without the trouble and delay of executing mortgages, or bonds, or other securities; without the wearisome investigation of intricate titles; without the dull, tedious, and expensive formalities of lawyers. And so it would be with all other transactions whatever, no other safeguard than that of triumphant and universally prevailing virtue ought ever to be looked for. Marriage, of course, would be on the same easy, but secure, footing as all other agreements. So far as it is a civil contract, this might very well be, if all men and all women were perfectly true, honourable, and virtuous. Nobody affected to believe that such a condition of affairs actually existed; but that it would soon arrive, some well-meaning persons confidently asserted, and seemed to credit it. I met with certain of the

advocates of the coming perfectibility, worthy, but somewhat credulous people: the men discoursed of its influence over all human affairs, the women treated it principally with reference to those matters which most nearly concern themselves. I listened to observations and conversations which to me, doubting of the blessed advent, were laughable.

One example will suffice: I went to drink coffee and tea, to listen to conversation more or less instructive, and to music, and to enjoy all such innocent recreations as are not inconsistent with perfectibility, at the handsome house of a very hospitable and agreeable perfectible. In the course of the evening a lady stole into the room, and took her seat on a solitary sofa opposite; she was a most lovely creature, in every respect, and I expressed my admiration of her in no measured terms to the lady of the house, with whom I was conversing, as I had supposed, in confidence, and under the belief that what I had said was to go no further. After a little while, the lady of the house crossed the room, sat down by the side of her lovely guest, and conversed earnestly with her, both the ladies occasionally looking at me. Afterwards, a signal was made that I was to approach; I obeyed it. The lady of the house then told the fair stranger, word for word, all that I had said about her, pausing from time to time, and asking me if I had not said so. It was impossible to deny it. 'Well, sir,' said the stranger lady, with a certain gracious gravity, when she had heard all my praises, and I had confirmed them, 'your homage is accepted, and when the perfectibility of the human race is accomplished, you shall be made happy.' 'Thank you, madam,' I answered, somewhat impertinently, I fear; 'and when the millennium commences, we will go and reside in the New Jerusalem; we will hire a handsome first-floor in a commodious house, hollowed out of one huge emerald, and live together in it!' She frowned at this harmless jest, but made no reply. I did not think that so rare a beauty could have looked so black, and withdrew in manifest anger.

A few days after our conversation, she related what I had said to Bysshe, adding: 'Your friend is a very strange person indeed; it is quite plain that he does not believe in the perfectibility of the human race. How unaccountable! and indeed he seems to make it the sole business of his life to scoff at everything!'

'How could you think of living with her in a house carved out of an emerald?' he inquired with his saddest look and in his most plaintive voice, when he told me this.

I answered: 'We read in the Book of Revelation that each of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem was a pearl, and one foundation of the walls was a topaz, another an amethyst, and so on; and consequently it did not seem too much to expect that when the number of the elect has been accomplished, and what she promised me is to take place, I might easily hire such apocalyptic apartments for us to live in together, as I proposed to her'.

He looked grave, and said mournfully: 'You laugh at everything! I am convinced that there can be no entire regeneration of mankind until laughter is put down!'

On that point at least we were agreed.

The poetic temperament is naturally melancholy, the poet's airy realms being thickly peopled by imaginary sorrows; and Shelley's natural melancholy had been confirmed and increased by manifold crosses, vexations, and disappointments; yet occasionally he could be merry, notwithstanding the strong aversion for laughter and ridicule which he habitually and vehemently expressed. He could indulge in a mirthful sally; he could play joyous, funny pranks, and could relate or even act them over again, in a vivacious manner, and with a keen relish and agreeable recollections of his own mischievous raillery. His frolics were ever peculiar and characteristic; their nature will be best explained and illustrated by an example.

One summer's evening he had to travel a short distance in his own country, in the county of Sussex—such, if I mistake not, for I know the adventure only from Bysshe's account of it, was the scene of his whimsical exploit. He set out on foot, expecting that the stage would soon overtake him. He had not proceeded far when the heavy coach came up. There was no room outside, but the six inside seats were unoccupied; he got in, and the vehicle rumbled along the dusty road. For a little while it was all very well, but the heavy stage coach stopped suddenly, and a heavy old woman came in to him, reddened with heat, steaming and running down with perspiration. She took her place in the middle seat, like a huge ass between a pair of enormous panniers; for, on one side was a mighty basket, crammed full of mellow apples, and on the other a like basket, equally well filled with large onions. The odour of the apples and the onions, and the aspect of the heated, melting, smoking old woman, were intolerable to the delicate, sensitive young poet. He bore it, at first, patiently, then impatiently, at last he could endure it no longer; so, starting up, he seated himself on the floor of the coach,

and, fixing his tearful, woeful eyes upon her, he addressed his companion thus, in thrilling accents:

‘For heaven’s sake, let us sit upon the ground,  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings!  
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,  
Some haunted by the ghosts they dispossessed;  
Some poisoned by their wives; some sleeping killed,  
All murdered!’

‘Oh, dear!’ exclaimed the terrified old woman, ‘Dear! dear! Oh, Lord! Oh, Lord!’

But when he shrieked out the two last words: ‘All murdered!’ she ran to the window in an agony, and, thrusting out her head, cried:

‘Oh, guard, guard! stop! Oh, guard, guard, guard! let me out!’

The door was opened, she alighted immediately with her strong-smelling wares, and through the united wit of two great poets, that of Shakespeare and his own, he was permitted to finish his journey alone.

He was proud of this achievement, and delighted in it long afterwards.

‘Show us, Bysshe, how you got rid of the old woman in Sussex.’

He sprang wildly on his feet, and, taking his seat on the floor, with a melancholy air, and in a piteous voice, cried out:

‘For heaven’s sake, let us sit upon the ground!’

When he had given out the words: ‘All murdered!’ with a fiendish yell, he started up, threw open the window, and began to call: ‘Guard! guard!’ often, to the astonishment of persons passing by, whose temperament was less poetic, and less excitable than his own.

So moving were the woes of the gentle Richard Plantagenet, told by the great dramatist, and declaimed by another poet, second to him, at least in time! So drastic was their effect!

Quitting the Swan of Avon, and the Swan of the Arun, and of Warnham Mere, we will return for a moment to the lovely and indignant lady.

Some months after the huge emerald had proved to be a stone of offence and a stumbling-block in the way to her good graces, I met her alone in Orchard Street; she was exceedingly handsome by daylight, but less handsome than she had appeared by candlelight; the tell-tale summer’s sun showed brown or yellow hues. It struck me that the emerald mansion would not be becoming to her complexion; it would be preferable to reside



in a ruby, or a topaz. She received me graciously, shaking hands cordially; and we walked round Portman Square together. To say the truth, I met her again soon after my first disaster, and, as a Christian, I desired to live and to die in peace with her. Accordingly, when she was quite alone, I ventured to creep up to her, and, sitting down softly by her side, humbly to address her. I said nothing of her transcendent beauty, which had been the cause of my original discomfiture, and had brought down upon my head the odious and opprobrious appellation of a scoffer; nor of the progress of mankind towards perfection, of which I doubted; but I spoke of indifferent subjects only; of chess, of cards, of quadrille. At first, certainly, she was somewhat crusty, treating me as an infidel ought always to be treated, but she softened by degrees.

‘Well! Have you made it up?’ the lady of the house asked, as she walked past us, and saw us conversing together in a friendly manner.

‘We never had anything to make up,’ answered the lovely lady, obligingly; ‘we never had any quarrel!’

She spoke much of Shelley, and in such terms that, had we been old and bitter enemies, we should have been at once reconciled. She spoke also of him whilst we were walking round the square, and with so great warmth, admiration, and enthusiasm, that the yellow tints on her skin rapidly and completely disappeared, and I thought she would look perfectly charming even in the emerald message.

‘I was talking about him with a female friend the other day, that he is so modest, so reserved, so pure, so virtuous,

A clear, immaculate, and silver fountain!

and we were saying what terrible havoc he would make, if he were at all rakish!’

‘If he were less modest, he would be less attractive, and therefore less dangerous.’

‘Yes, it would be so. But that did not occur to us.’

‘I wonder it did not, for it is sufficiently obvious.’

‘Have you seen him lately?’

‘Have you?’

There were many mutual inquiries.

‘Does he not visit you then?’

‘I wish he did; I would gladly, oh, so gladly, give half of all I possess, if he were an habitual, I will add even an occasional visitor! Cannot you bring him to me? Will you?’

'I will try.'

'You said you wish to learn quadrille; we will teach you. My mother, my sister, and myself have lived much in Spain, where alone they understand the game: quadrille is well played there. If you can excuse our not playing for money, which we never do, we will play with you whenever you choose.'

'To learn so difficult a game as quadrille demands much leisure, and I have none.'

'That is a pity, for it is well worth learning! However, you will come and see me?'

'It must be after my return to London, because I am going into the country to-morrow, for some months.'

'Whenever you please; but bring him with you.'

In one respect only is the long vacation too long; on every other account I have invariably found it too short. The absence from London is so long, that it causes a disruption of studies, pursuits, and acquaintances; of acquaintances that might have ripened into valuable friendships.

When I returned to town in November, the recollection of my obliging instructress in quadrille had faded, and Bysshe and myself were so ungrateful as to forget the lovely perfectible! The precise nature of the perfect felicity which was promised to the elect, and was to be enjoyed by them, when the perfectibility of the human species was accomplished, I never discovered. It certainly was not that kind of felicity that one would at first infer from the lax, ambiguous manner of talking in use among zealous votaries. It was something ethereal, spiritualized, transcendent, remote from the gratification of the senses, and the grossness of mortal frailty—a certain celestial joy. In truth, my curiosity did not stimulate me to inquire minutely into the conditions of a state of society, in which I did not myself believe.

During his residence of some weeks or months in Half-Moon Street, Bysshe was happy and comfortable—comfortable according to his own peculiar scheme of life. There were few shelves for books in the little sitting-room on the first-floor; but books accumulated rapidly, and they were arranged in rows on the floor, in the recesses on each side of the fireplace; and they were piled in disorder on tables and chairs, and heaped up under tables in confusion. Many books had been left behind, through a miserable negligence and inconceivable rapidity of movement and evolutions, in localities from whence they never emerged, and were never seen or heard of more. If he possessed

the faculty of losing volumes without number, he had the power also to assemble around him again, in a few days, a respectable library. In one recess remained, but little disturbed by any of us, in a long row, a Latin edition, or translation, of the works of Emmanuel Kant. It was comprised in I know not how many volumes; they were in boards, and were uncut, and unopened. Of these, the young metaphysician had been most anxious to obtain possession, but he totally neglected them when obtained. I do not believe that he ever read a single page of the transcendental philosopher. I took up a volume myself occasionally, and attempted to get through a few pages, but I did not make any progress. I found in the mystical dogmatism nothing attractive in any respect, but, on the contrary, much to repel me. The only remark which I recollect to have made was that the word 'purus' occurred many times in every page, and in every case, gender, and number.

The Kantian philosophy was much in vogue at that time, but I never found an adept, who was able to explain to me the meaning of that which of myself, and without the advantage and assistance of oral instruction, it was totally impossible to comprehend. Harriet's powers of reading aloud were in full force, and were often brought into requisition. *Rokeby* had lately appeared, a poor performance, at which the critics laughed unmercifully; but the fair reader was pleased with it, and read it aloud more than once throughout.

There were a few pleasing passages, pretty descriptions, and good lines interspersed, here and there, with much fluent commonplace verse and bookmaking. I listened with attention, but I could never make out the story, either of that poem, or of the other poems of the same fertile author, which I heard from the same lips. Scene after scene passes over the mind like a dream, and no permanent or distinct impression is left behind by the flitting shadows.

Finding myself in the neighbourhood of *Rokeby* some years afterwards, I remembered enough of what I had heard to be induced to visit the spot. It repaid a ride, and was well worth the deviation from my direct course. The confluence of the Greta and the Tees is pleasing, perhaps even striking. Bysshe was sometimes able to give his attention for a little while to the reading, which flowed on easily in a continuous, unbroken stream, like the versification of the Poet of the Scottish Border; he then suddenly started off, and returned, and heard a little more; the uninspired and uninspiring strains still trickling down, like the

waters of the Greta in their rocky bed. It may seem, that the many fits and many bouts of linked readings, long drawn out, must have been wearisome, but they were not so; the good Harriet read well, clearly, distinctly, in an agreeable voice, and with a just accent and emphasis; but the principal charm of these performances was, that they were so delightful to the performer, she enjoyed herself so much in the healthy exercise of the chest, that it would have been churlish indeed not to have lent a patient ear.

‘Come, sit down, be quite still; do not walk about the room, as Bysshe does; be silent, and attend to me; do not ask any foolish questions! When I come to anything that I think you cannot understand, I will explain it to you myself!’

Not to humour her would have been inhuman, it would have been impossible. Shelley was visited occasionally by a few agreeable, and by some tolerably agreeable acquaintances, chiefly of a literary description; whom to write at length would be tedious, as the author of another equally uninspired, but more popular, more extensively and permanently popular poem, than *Rokeby*, *Propria quæ maribus*, truly sings concerning nouns of anomalous and irregular genders. One of these visitors may be named, the Chevalier Lawrence, a Knight of Malta, who had lately reached some celebrity by his novel, *The Empire of the Nairs*. He had resided long in the court of some small German potentate, and related anecdotes that were amusing enough of the courts and literature of Germany. He spoke much of nobility, to which, in his capacity of a Knight of Malta, he had devoted himself; and of some work, which he had written concerning the nobles of England, proving that the real English nobles are not the peers of the realm, as is universally, but erroneously, believed, but the old families of landed gentry; and this, taking nobility in a continental sense, and according to continental notions, is strictly true.

I never fell in with the discourse of nobility—I do not know even its proper title: with his great work, upon which his immortality rests, *The Empire of the Nairs*, I could not get on, although I tried to read it more than once; it was too roseate, too much the amatory honey-dew of Tommy Moore. To my young friends the Indian tale was attractive; they read it; and even Eliza, who never read anything else, read it, and declared, in an audible voice, that it was quite delightful. Gracious Heaven! What would Miss Warne say?

I saw a great deal of Bysshe during his residence in the quiet,

convenient street, which unquestionably, however paradoxical it may seem, suited him better than the mountains of Wales or Cumberland.

'If the man in the moon be a queer fellow, what are we to make of the man in the Half-Moon?'

'The man in the moon!' he said, in a piteous voice, 'the man in the moon!' And having looked on the moon imploringly for some time, he asked: 'Do you really believe there is a man in the moon? More than one?' He then sighed deeply, exclaiming, 'Poor fellow!'

I sat with him, read with him, walked with him, talked with him; and that there might be no limit to my self-devotion, I dined with him.

As we travel nowadays through London in a cab, a vehicle unknown in the days of which I write, through devious ways and unheard-of streets, known only to cabmen and their associates, the fairies; in like manner did I walk with Bysshe then. I always let him lead the way, and followed his guidance: his course and choice of direction were erratic and uncommon, and he would dart across the road and quickly enter some unpromising, ill-omened street or passage, and hurry me along it: I have often wondered by what impulse he was thus borne along. His flight was to escape from, not to pursue; to get away from some object for which he had conceived a sudden dislike.

To return to dinner. At the bare proposal to order dinner, poor Shelley stood aghast, in speechless trance; when he had somewhat recovered from the outrage to his feelings, 'Ask Harriet', he shrilly cried, with desponding, supplicating mien. The good Harriet herself was no proficient in culinary arts; she had never been initiated in the mysteries of housewifery: 'Whatever you please', was her ordinary answer.

I was once staying at the house of a country clergyman; the worthy pastor was eminently skilled in divine things; his not less worthy wife was deeply conversant with human affairs, well versed in all the learning of the kitchen, excellent in ordering the genial board, as became the helpmate of a first-rate theologian. There were usually a few neighbours, guests at dinner. Amongst these, one day, was a lovely young woman; healthy, comely, fair, and plump; the daughter of a substantial farmer of a superior degree.

When the visitors had departed, my kind and notable hostess asked me in confidence what I thought of the handsome, well-fleshed girl?

'I think that she is a beautiful creature! I have seldom seen a prettier young woman of the kind!'

'She is, indeed, and she is as good as she is beautiful—so useful in a house.'

'I had heard much about her, but I never saw her before; and I am satisfied that all I heard about her is true. I have had a great deal of talk with her; she seems to understand everything, and to be wonderfully clever in a family. I could not take my eyes off her all the evening; I am afraid she would think me rude, but I could not help it!' 'She is so beautiful, it is very difficult to help looking at her; it is not easy to take one's eyes off her!' 'No! It is not indeed! I sat looking at her, and thinking what delightful jellies she would make; I could not help looking at her, and saying to myself, how I should like to taste her calves'-foot jelly. And I longed to tell her so!'

Poor Harriet had pledged herself at Keswick to learn of Mrs. Southey to make tea-cakes; but Mrs. Southey would not teach, or Harriet would not learn, and she had not redeemed her pledge. It was her only chance, and she lost it, which was unfortunate: it would have been a green spot in a desert. To say: 'Whatever you please', is a sorry mode of ordering dinner, and it was all she ever said on that head. Some considerable time after the appointed hour, a roasted shoulder of mutton, of the coarsest, toughest grain, graced, or disgraced, the ill-supplied table; the watery gravy that issued from the perverse joint, when it was cut, a duty commonly assigned to me, seemed the most apt of all things to embody the conception of penury and utter destitution. There were potatoes in every respect worthy of the mutton; and the cheese, which was either forgotten or uneatable, closed the ungenial repast. Sometimes there was a huge boiled leg of mutton, boiled till the bone was ready to drop out of the meat, which shrank and started from it on all sides, without any sauce, but with turnips raw, and manifestly unworthy to be boiled any longer. Sometimes there were impregnable beefsteaks—soles for shooting-shoes. I have dropped a word, a hint, about a pudding; a pudding, Bysshe said dogmatically, is a prejudice. I have wished that the converse of the proposition were true, and that a prejudice was a pudding, and then, according to the judgment of my more enlightened young friends, I should never have been without one.

It is a strong proof of the extraordinary fascination of the society of the Divine Poet, that to purchase it—and it was absolutely requisite to pay a price—I submitted cheerfully so

often, and for such a long period, to so many inconveniences and privations. I was never indifferent to the amenities of life; I had always been accustomed to comfort—to a certain elegance, indeed: at college, in preparing for college, and more especially at home; for in a district where the creature comforts were well cared for, my own family were always conspicuous for an exact and exquisite nicety. In this respect, as in some others, there was something contradictory in Shelley: he emphatically—I may say ostentatiously—renounced whatever might be stigmatized by a morose philosopher of Spartan habits and principles as luxury; and yet, like the majority of mankind, he appeared to be best pleased when he was most at his ease. He continually and openly lamented his rude and tyrannical extrusion from Oxford; and it was manifest that he was unconsciously sensible of the loss of innumerable commodities; he secretly pined for he knew not what; in truth, he pined for the flesh-pots of Egypt; for the leeks, and the onions, and the water-melons. At that university, behold with reverence the rare wisdom of our forefathers! a man was compelled to live comfortably whether he would or not, and in spite of himself.

Bysshe's dietary was frugal and independent; very remarkable and quite peculiar to himself. When he felt hungry he would dash into the first baker's shop, buy a loaf and rush out again, bearing it under his arm; and he strode onwards in his rapid course, breaking off pieces of bread and greedily swallowing them. But however frugal the fare, the waste was considerable, and his path might be tracked, like that of Hop-o'-my-Thumb through the wood, in Mother Goose her tale, by a long line of crumbs.

The spot, where he sat reading, or writing, and eating his dry bread, was likewise marked out by a circle of crumbs and fragments scattered on the floor. He took with bread, frequently by way of condiment, not watercresses, as did the Persians of old, according to the fable of Xenophon, but common pudding raisins. These he purchased at some mean little shop, that he might be the more speedily served; and he carried them loose in his waistcoat-pocket, and ate them with his dry bread. He occasionally rolled up little pellets of bread, and, in a sly, mysterious manner, shot them with his thumb, hitting the persons—whom he met in his walks—on the face, commonly on the nose, at which he grew to be very dexterous.

When he was dining at a coffee-house, he would sometimes amuse himself thus, if that could be an amusement, which was

done unconsciously. A person receiving an unceremonious fillip on the nose, after this fashion, started and stared about; but I never found that anybody, although I was often apprehensive that someone might resent it, perceived or suspected from what quarter the offending missile had come. The wounded party seemed to find satisfaction in gazing upwards at the ceiling, in the belief that a piece of plaster had fallen from thence. When he was eating his bread alone over his book he would shoot his pellets about the room, taking aim at a picture, at an image, or at any other object which attracted his notice. He had been taught by a French lady to make panada; and with this food he often indulged himself. His simple cookery was performed thus. He broke a quantity—often, indeed, a surprising quantity—of bread into a large basin, and poured boiling water upon it. When the bread had been steeped awhile, and had swelled sufficiently, he poured off the water, squeezing it out of the bread, which he chopped up with a spoon; he then sprinkled pounded loaf sugar over it, and grated nutmeg upon it, and devoured the mass with a prodigious relish. He was standing one day in the middle of the room, basin in hand, feeding himself voraciously, gorging himself with pap.

‘Why, Bysshe,’ I said, ‘you lap it up as greedily as the Valkyriæ in Scandinavian story lap up the blood of the slain!’

‘Aye!’ he shouted out, with grim delight, ‘I lap up the blood of the slain!’

The idea captivated him; he was continually repeating the words; and he often took panada, I suspect, merely to indulge this wild fancy, and say: ‘I am going to lap up the blood of the slain! To sup up the gore of murdered kings!’

Having previously fed himself after his fashion from his private stores, he was independent of dinner, and quite indifferent to it; the slice of tough mutton would remain untouched upon his plate, and he would sit at table reading some book, often reading aloud, seemingly unconscious of the hospitable rites in which others were engaged, his bread bullets meanwhile being discharged in every direction.

The provisions supplied at lodgings in London were too frequently in those days detestable, and the service which was rendered abominable and disgusting. Meat was procured wherever meat might be bought most cheaply, in order that, being paid for dearly, a more enormous profit might be realized upon it; and those dishes were selected in which the ignorance in cookery of a servant-of-all-work might be least striking.



Our dinners, therefore, were constructive, a dumb show, a mere empty, idle ceremony; our only resource against absolute starvation was tea. 'We will have some muffins and crumpets for tea,' the famished Harriet would say. 'They will butter them!' Bysshe exclaimed, in a voice thrilling with horror. Harriet sometimes ordered them privily, without consulting him; and when they were brought in silently, and appeared smiling upon the tea-table, he dealt with them as remorselessly as with Mrs. Southey's tea-cakes at Keswick. We meekly sought relief in buttered toast; but the butter was too commonly bad and ill-suited to our palates, but answering admirably the final cause of making the toast; that not being relished in the parlour, there might be more left for the unclean maid to eat. Penny buns were our assured resource. The survivors of those days of peril and hardship are indebted for their existence to the humane interposition and succour of penny buns. A shilling's-worth of penny buns for tea. If the purchase was entrusted to the maid, she got such buns as none could believe to have been made on earth, proving thereby incontestably that the girl had some direct communication with the infernal regions, where alone they could have been procured. Shelley was fond of penny buns, but he never bought them unless he was put up to it.

'Get a shilling's-worth of penny buns, Bysshe,' Harriet said, 'at some good confectioner's,' the situation of whose shop she described.

He rushed out with incredible alacrity, like a Wind God, and in an instant returned, and was heard stumbling and tumbling upstairs, with the bag of buns, open at the top, in his hand; and he would sometimes, in his hot haste, drop them on the stairs, and they all rolled down to the bottom, and he picked them up again; but we were not particular. We had our own tea; it usually lay spread out on an open paper upon a side table; others might help themselves, and probably they did so, but there was always some left for us.

Such was the Poetic Life! But, ah, sweet youth, how soon it fades! All these privations and miseries were then as nothing. They were the salt of life, and surely we associated with the salt of the earth. To say the truth, I love a good penny bun to this hour; I look upon one with gratitude, as a friend in need, with emotion, as my preserver! The faculty of inducing his friends, and particularly myself, to undergo losses, derangements, and annoyances many and various, for the sake of his instructive and fascinating company, was certainly remarkable enough, but

it was trifling indeed—a slight exercise of the authority of talents and genius, in comparison with another and most astonishing power over the minds and souls and conduct of others, which he now and then unintentionally, and as it were unconsciously, put forth.

The conversation of the Divine Poet was found to be especially attractive and enchanting by all females, particularly by the young and intellectual. He never was inclined to go to bed; it may be truly affirmed that he never went to bed; he was sent to bed, taken to bed, put to bed, but he never retired to rest of his own accord and voluntarily. He was commonly most communicative, unreserved, and eloquent and enthusiastic, when those around him were inclining to yield to the influence of sleep, or rather at the hour when they would have been disposed to seek their chambers but for the bewitching charms of his discourse. If he was in company with two or three young ladies at bedtime, they would continue to sit with him, hearing him and asking him questions. He took no note of time, and never thought of retiring himself, and the quiet hours of night glided away like moments; they remained—female doctors disputing with him in the temple of wisdom and virtue, until someone of the fair audience, recollecting herself at last, exclaimed in a pause of the animated conversation:

‘Well, but it is time to go to bed; surely it must be late!’

‘Gracious goodness! It is five o’clock—it is six o’clock in the morning!’

‘It cannot be; it is impossible. There must be some mistake!’

‘No; there is not. Hark! it is striking six! How incredible! How quickly the time has passed! It is wonderful! There is no use in going to bed now; we must remain as we are. We will have breakfast as soon as we can. I am hungry! It is a fine, bright morning; let us take a turn in the garden; it will refresh us!’

And so the debate was adjourned, the conclave was broken up at the crowing of the cock, and the proceedings terminated with a walk and breakfast.

We, that are of purer fire,  
Imitate the starry quire,  
Who in their nightly watchful spheres  
Lead in sweet round the months and years.

It has happened that he had only one female disciple during the watches of the night, and the winged hours sped not less rapidly in interesting, engrossing debate. In two or three instances I have heard there was a noise about it, but most

assuredly without other foundation than that such nocturnal consultations are unusual.

When the irresistible force of attraction was known, the old birds drove the young ones to their nests; the old hens sent the pullets to roost; and this was most readily effected by hunting the sorcerer to his chamber: the old bores dispatched the young Adonis to bed, and then they might dispose of every widowed Venus as they would.

In the *Lives of the Saints*, some acts, we are told, are set forth for example's sake, and that they may be universally imitated; others for edification only; others neither for example or edification, but solely as marvels to be wondered at, and in order to demonstrate the infinite power of the supreme disposer of all things.

This strange social anomaly, of the occurrence of which the parties were totally unconscious at the time, is not adduced with the recommendation: 'Go and do likewise', but to exemplify a wonderful charm, a potent spell, that, as far as I am able to discover, was never exercised by any other individual, however gifted. To me, observing the precise and sometimes painful punctuality with which ladies hasten to bed, this spiritual magnetism of my incomparable young friend has appeared the more astounding.

I have frequently wondered that the most inspiring conversation, the most interesting volume, the most ravishing music, the most critical situation at chess, has always proved less attractive than a bedroom candlestick, which, even in the best appointed houses, is commonly but a scurvy utensil. Nothing is ever engaging enough at the prescribed moment of departure to obtain even the brief respite of five minutes. We must except the stupid animal pastime of dancing, and this, when it once sets in, it is hardly possible to confine within moderate limits. What in the world did Bysshe say to his charmed and charming young watchwomen? I have often essayed—perhaps with a profane hand, and therefore in vain—to raise the veil that covered the face of the mystical Isis; my attempts were uniformly abortive. I have frequently inquired of my friend: 'What were you talking about all the long night, Bysshe, with your attendant fairies? Pray, what were you telling them?' He stared, and was perplexed; he did not, and could not, inform me. He had no concealments, since nothing remained for him to tell; the whole had passed away. Had he been then a mere conduit-pipe—a channel to convey pure streams from sources higher and nearer

to heaven than even his own spotless mind? I have asked again and again the fair interlocutresses for some samples of the nightly dialogues, but I never obtained more than general expressions of vague delight. A tall, hard-featured, middle-aged man, impatiently forcing his way through the crowd that commonly impedes the passage along Westminster Bridge, was once pointed out to me as the famous Walking Stewart—as the man who had walked all over India and the Far East, and every step of the way from the East Indies to London, save only the passage over some rivers and the little bit of sea, which separates Calais from Dover. I have often thought of this celebrated pedestrian in conjunction with my friend's nocturnal disquisitions. The connexion is not obvious; but it may be shortly explained. William Godwin told me that he knew Stewart well, and that he was worth knowing, because, without knowing him, nobody could possibly have any idea what a bore really was.

His chief delight was to walk at the rate of five miles an hour straight on end as long as it was light. In the evening he sought literary and scientific conversation, and the commerce of wits. He had lodgings somewhere near Westminster Hall; and on a fixed day of the week he gave a conversation party; and for that purpose he hired a spacious room at one of the coffee-houses round Palace Yard. The room was large, but the attendance was small, in spite of all his efforts to collect visitors, and moreover the affair was but dull. He complained to William Godwin: 'You and the other great wits of the day seldom come to my evening parties, and I know why you do not come. It is because you are afraid that the good things which you say will be lost; but I assure you, you are mistaken. Not a single word will be thrown away; nothing will be lost. I have taken effectual precautions to prevent it. I have engaged twelve eminent shorthand writers; they are placed behind screens in different parts of the room, very judiciously posted. They take down whatever they hear, and report it to myself; nothing can escape them. So fear not; not a word will be lost; talk your best!'

These arrangements having been made generally known, the attendance became thinner, the conversation tighter, and the shorthand writers' reports more meagre. 'For if there be anything in the world', William Godwin concluded, 'that can effectually seal up a man's lips, it is the assurance that every word a man utters in private conversation will be written down and recorded against him!'

I have often wished—vainly wished—that one at least of the

twelve shorthand writers had been placed behind a screen during Bysshe's nightly colloquies, to catch and secure for ever on paper a philosophical apocalypse, of which the duration was unhappily so transient. What a delightful and precious appendix to an imperfect biography would the notes of the shorthand writers afford! Shelley was given to sit up all night, and he often practised it. I have sometimes sat up with him reading, conversing, drinking tea, playing at chess. The achievement is much less serious than persons, who have not made the experiment, would suppose. The night soon passes away; its duration indeed is but short. Nobody thinks of going to bed before twelve, it would be too early; at twelve the night commences. Nobody would go to bed at five, it would be too late; at five it is light—it is time to go out and take a walk; at five the night ceases. Five hours practically comprehend the whole night, except during the depth of winter, a portion of the year which none would select for keeping watch. To take a part of the day with which people in general are more conversant: a man who has dined at four comes home at six from his evening saunter. He looks over the newspaper, has tea at seven, plays at chess, at cards; reads a light book, listens to music, or takes a part in it. How soon is it eleven o'clock; and so quietly and quickly passes away the night from twelve to five, being a like space of five hours.

It may be fit to remark here, that I have always designated the distinguished person of whom I have often spoken, and shall often have occasion to speak, as William Godwin. Shelley called him shortly, Godwin; but I was not sufficiently intimate with him to justify the use of so familiar a title. In speaking of him to his own original, peculiar friends and associates, I have at first said, 'Mr. Godwin'; but I was instantly corrected—I may perhaps say snubbed—by the emendation, 'William Godwin, you mean'. It was much as if I had spoken of a Quaker to Quakers, and adopted, to their discomfiture, terms implying creature-worship. His primary destination and proper occupation was minister in some congregation of Protestant dissenters, of what denomination I know not, being myself totally ignorant on the subject of religious dissent; and he escaped service on juries, in parochial offices, and the like burthens, by returning himself to the last as a dissenting minister. As there is no great danger of a revolt in this instance, the prejudices of caste may be respected, and the Brahmin may receive his proper appellation of William Godwin.

Shelley told me, when he was at Oxford, that shortly before he came to the university he had taken poison for love of a young lady who had refused his hand. He had swallowed a large dose of arsenic, but his stomach rejected it, and he threw it up, on the principal part of it; and he described various distressing symptoms as vividly as if he was really suffering from the effects of the corrosive and deleterious metal; but it was purely imaginary. He frequently discoursed poetically, pathetically, and with fervid melancholy fancies of suicide; but I do not believe that he ever contemplated seriously and practically the perpetration of the crime. It was not at all in accordance with his principles. He suffered occasionally from certain painful infirmities; but his stamina was sound, his constitution and general health good. He coughed at times violently, as many others cough, especially after some imprudent exposure; and his whole life, as far as regards the care and preservation of his health, was but one imprudence. He coughed violently, and sometimes felt a pain in his side and chest, and he called it spasms. He coughed, and declared that he broke blood-vessels and spit blood. I have heard him cough, and seen him spit, but I never observed, although I watched him narrowly, that he voided any blood. He was encouraged in these chimeras, and in the most unfounded notion of being consumptive, by persons who thought that they had an interest in his bad health, and who trafficked and made a profit of their own pretended ailments.

There was a coarse, fat woman, who used to sponge upon him unmercifully under pretence of breaking blood-vessels. It was said that her lungs were her stock in trade; that she got three hundred a year, by her broken blood-vessels, receiving, as it were, compensation to that amount at least from the credulously charitable.

'Poor Matilda,' that was not quite the name, he said to me, one day, horror-stricken with trembling compassion, 'poor Matilda has broken a blood-vessel, and is spitting blood!'

'Poor Matilda', I answered, 'has broken the cheese-toaster, and is spitting toasted cheese!'

He thought me very inhuman, I am sure, but he laughed; in truth, the woman was only drunk all the time. He coloured and laughed, but relieved her, and she continued to spit blood and to sponge upon the poor fellow, and, in every sense of the word, to spoil him.

In a crowded stage-coach Shelley once happened to sit opposite an old woman with very thick legs, who, as he imagined,

was afflicted with elephantiasis, an exceedingly rare and most terrible disease, in which the legs swell and become as thick as those of an elephant, together with many other distressing symptoms, as the thickening and cracking of the skin, and indeed a whole Iliad of woes, of which he had recently read a formidable description in some medical work, that had taken entire possession of his fanciful and impressible soul. The patient, quite unconscious of her misery, sat dozing quietly over against him. He also took it into his head that the disease is very infectious, and that he had caught it of his corpulent and drowsy fellow-traveller; he presently began to discover unequivocal symptoms of the fearful contagion in his own person. I never saw him so thoroughly unhappy as he was, whilst he continued under the influence of this strange and unaccountable impression. His female friends tried to laugh him out of his preposterous whim, bantered him and inquired how he came to find out that his fair neighbour had such thick legs? He did not relish, or even understand their jests, but sighed deeply. By the advice of his friends, he was prevailed upon to consult a skilful and experienced surgeon, and submitted to a minute and careful examination: the surgeon of course assured him, that no signs or trace of elephantiasis could be discerned. He further informed him, that the disease is excessively rare, almost unknown, in this part of the world; that it is not infectious, and that a person really afflicted by it could not bear to travel in a crowded stage-coach. Bysshe shook his head, sighed still more deeply, and was more thoroughly convinced than ever, that he was the victim of a cruel and incurable disease; and that these assurances were only given with the humane design of soothing one doomed to a miserable and inevitable death. His imagination was so much disturbed, that he was perpetually examining his own skin, and feeling and looking at that of others. One evening, during the access of his fancied disorder, when many young ladies were standing up for a country dance, he caused a wonderful consternation amongst these charming creatures by walking slowly along the row of girls and curiously surveying them, placing his eyes close to their necks and bosoms, and feeling their breasts and bare arms, in order to ascertain whether any of the fair ones had taken the horrible disease. He proceeded with so much gravity and seriousness, and his looks were so woebegone, that they did not resist, or resent, the extraordinary liberties, but looked terrified, and as if they were about to undergo some severe surgical operation at his hands. Their

partners were standing opposite in silent and angry amazement, unable to decide in what way the strange manipulations were to be taken; yet nobody interrupted his heartbroken handlings, which seemed, from his dejected air, to be preparatory to cutting his own throat. At last the lady of the house perceived what the young philosopher was about, and by assuring him that not one of the young ladies, as she had herself ascertained, had been infected, and, with gentle expostulations, induced him to desist and to suffer the dancing to proceed without further examinations.

The monstrous delusion continued for some days; with the aspect of grim despair he came stealthily and opened the bosom of my shirt several times a day, and minutely inspected my skin, shaking his head, and by his distressed mien plainly signifying that he was not by any means satisfied with the state of my health. He also quietly drew up my sleeves, and by rubbing it investigated the skin of my arms; he also measured my legs and ankles, spanning them with a convulsive grasp. 'Bysshe, we both have the legs and the skin of an elephant, but neither of us has his sagacity!' He shook his head in sad, silent disapproval; to jest in the very jaws of death was hardened insensibility, not genuine philosophy. He opened in like manner the bosoms and viewed the skin of his other associates, and even of strangers. Nor did females escape his curious scrutiny, nor were they particularly solicitous to avoid it; so impressive were the solemnity and gravity, and the profound melancholy of his fear-stricken and awe-inspiring aspect, that there could be no doubt of the innocence and purity of his intentions: and if he had proceeded to more private examinations and more delicate investigations, the young ladies would unquestionably have submitted themselves with reverence to his researches, which, however, were arrested by authority in the case of the fair dancers before they had greatly exceeded the bounds of decorum.

This strange fancy continued to afflict him for several weeks, and to divert, or distress, his friends, and then it was forgotten as suddenly as it had been taken up, and gave place to more cheerful reminiscences, or forebodings: he was able to listen to, or even occasionally, but rarely, to relate himself droll stories. One of them, as it is perfectly innocent, may be repeated without envy or calumny: it had occurred two or three years before.

He called one morning on an acquaintance in London, and saluted the door, as he was wont to do, with a thundering rap, and followed it up with a corresponding application to the bell.



His invocation, although sufficiently audible, was not answered. The injunction, 'rap and ring', was never thrown away upon him; he made his coming heard. The summons was repeated with increased energy, and he was just about to try the effect of a third attack, for he was naturally and habitually impatient, when the door was partially opened, and the good-natured and obliging Mr. Graham addressed him with extreme trepidation over the chain, solemnly assuring him that he was the master of the house, and the only man who resided in it. 'Why, what the devil is the matter here, Graham?' The exclamation and a burst of shrill, shrieking laughter led to an explanation, and the tone of Mr. Graham's nerves was so much restored, that he was able to unhook the chain and admit him.

Having carefully barricaded the door he conducted Bysshe upstairs into the front bedroom. He stooped down, and held a whispered conversation for some time with a person under the bed, and after a long parley and often-repeated assurances, crawled forth into the light, covered with fluff and feathers, the Platonic lover, for such he was. He was greatly agitated at first, but having composed himself by degrees, he proceeded to relate the strange story of his amour.

In his accustomed solitary walks about the streets of London he had fallen in with a lady, still reasonably young and passably good-looking, who seemed to be desirous of making his acquaintance. He entered into conversation with her, and they formed a philosophical friendship on the instant, and on the spot. They used to meet and walk together, and converse; to converse after their own peculiar fashion; for the lady, being excessively loquacious, said everything, and the gentleman, on the contrary, being remarkably taciturn, said nothing. They also corresponded; her voluminous epistles arrived daily, and were answered by his letters of a moderate length. A shower overtook the happy pair one morning in their walk, a coach was called to convey the lady to her home, or rather to set her down prudently near it. They took their seats, and toddled on together, the fair one discoursing, with her accustomed volubility, of the nature of love in the abstract, and her mute adorer listening with due and delighted attention. But presently the lady became vehemently disturbed; she pointed out with extreme and overwhelming emotion a suspicious hackney coach, which she declared was following them; it contained her jealous husband; he would overtake and exterminate them both. The lover sat as far back as he could, to conceal himself, and not

venturing to look out of the window, he took all on trust, on the lady's word. The chase continued; she declared they were undone; to baffle pursuit, they drove about in different directions, for several hours; eventually, the enemy's coach was no longer in sight; it was the moment to escape; they must part; she would drive homewards; and the gallant lover must take to his heels, and make the best of his way to some place of security, for if her cruel husband caught him, he would inevitably murder him. The frightened lover ran straight home, like a hunted cat; the fair object had terrified him so completely that he fancied he was followed and watched, and that the injured, or rather the offended husband, had seen him enter his door. Hence the protection of Mr. Graham, and all the notable precautions and expedients upon which Shelley had dropped. The state of apprehension was cruel. His father was very particular, a man of exemplary piety, who had a violent antipathy to sighs and amorous glances, and if he should detect any attachment, Platonic or other, he would certainly barbecue him. The son was not pious, but he also was particular; he had a particular dislike to stand a shot, and a particular aversion for gunshot wounds, which had been increased by his observations in walking the hospitals. It was horrible to think that a causelessly jealous, narrow-minded monster might come at any moment, pull him out from under his bed by the leg, and shoot him dead in his own bedroom! Bysshe loved a bit of romance, a perilous adventure, a hairbreadth escape: he stood and listened to the tale, quivering with delight.

'But you have got her letters! Where are they? Where are they? Show them to me—let me see them. You may trust me!'

A pile of letters was produced—of letters crossed and recrossed, and crossed again. Bysshe caught up one, and began to read it eagerly; after hurrying over a few pages, he threw it down, and cried out:

'She is mad! She is mad! The woman is mad, raving mad!'

Upon a calm, deliberate examination of the correspondence, it was manifest, even to the lover himself, that such was really the case. He had got hold of a mad woman, or rather she had got hold of him. She was possibly out on furlough, and a fresh access having appeared, the pursuit, if she had actually been pursued, was not by an unkind husband, with destructive swords and pistols, but by a kind keeper with a well-aired, conservative strait waistcoat. The existence of a husband probably was but

an hallucination of the mind; and the loved one was some poor, insane spinster. Not deeming it expedient to look out of the window, he admitted that he had never seen the pursuing coach.

I asked Bysshe what the attractive lunatic's letters were about. The passages which I read treated exclusively of Hermes Trismegistus, to whom the lady compared her Platonic, and somewhat frigid and apathetic lover. Whether Hermes Trismegistus also concealed himself under his bed, when he had made too free with the wife of Thoth Moses, and had rashly stirred up jealousy in Egypt, she did not state.

With thrice great Hermes, or unsphere  
The spirit of Plato.

Nor did she say whether the operation of unsphering was effected by drawing him with terriers, or otherwise, from under the bed, like an earthed fox, or a badger, from his hiding-place. The frame of Shelley's mind, by nature and habit, was serious—melancholy, but that he had no feeling for the comic was not true; he delighted to tell this droll tale to his female friends; to tell it dramatically, acting parts of it, and shrieking with paroxysms of the wildest laughter. He had a like, but a longer tale about another acquaintance, who took up with, or took off with a mad woman; a right merry and conceited geste it is, but it belongs to a subsequent period. Yet by an ill-timed jest have I sometimes offended him—for example: He was speaking with somewhat unreasonable displeasure of his father's relish for port wine:

‘Your father reminded me forcibly of Milton's Comus.’

‘How is that possible? It is absurd!’

‘It is possible and true. Comus, who must have been a good judge of wine, said to the Lady Alice of the brothers Egerton, much to the credit of themselves and of the hospitality of Ludlow Castle:

‘Their Port was more than human’.

A brother poet could not bear that the quaint majesty of Milton's Masque should furnish a handle for a paltry pun; and he was right.

The cousins, with whom we had formerly associated, had quitted London, and were gone to complete their medical education, if I mistake not, at Edinburgh; they were good-natured and obliging, but insipid and insensible, and incapable of comprehending Bysshe's poetical and philosophical flights of fancy. He never mentioned them.

He saw nothing of his own relatives, but agreeable associates were not wanting, neither were intruders nor obtruders. There was no end of obtrusion; the word intrusion is not strong enough. One person wanted to teach Harriet Italian; another, probably, would have given, or sold to Eliza, instructions in Hebrew, or Arabic; but the greater number, without any excuse or pretence, forced themselves upon him. He was a rock to which limpets stuck fast, and periwinkles attached themselves. *Queen Mab* was now printed, but it was not published, I believe; it was not publicly exposed for sale, but copies had been privately distributed to friends. The poem had attracted attention. Shelley is the only modern poet whose verses uniformly appear to be inspired; no other poet of recent times is so completely and universally under the influence of inspiration. The earliest, the most hasty, the least finished, the most unformed and irregular of his poems have, notwithstanding their manifold defects, something superhuman about them. They seem to have been breathed, not by a mere mortal, but by some god or demon. His writings are invariably demoniacal, plainly the compositions of a demoniacal man. The least striking and complete of his productions has a preternatural air and tone. Of other poets, his contemporaries, the masterpieces are sometimes good, very good indeed; it would be unjust to deny it. But the trundling of a wheelbarrow cannot be compared to the pace of a racehorse, to the bounding of an antelope, or to the flight of an eagle, although it may often happen that the barrow is admirably trundled by a robust and active navigator—by the choicest flower of hodmen; still, there cannot be any comparison between the different modes of progression.

Shelley was uniformly a gentleman, eminently and strikingly such, and his Muse is always a lady. In all their dealings with him, and they were many and various, the nine sacred sisters conducted themselves like nine gentlewomen; whilst vulgarity was too commonly the characteristic feature of the poetry of coetaneous writers. This odious quality is of course consummate in the productions of the Cockney versifiers; there was something low-lived about the Lake school. And the chief of the romantic style wrote about barons and knights, it is true; but it is equally true that Sir Walter Scott spoke of these aristocratical personages, not as if he was one of themselves, but as if he had been their factor, steward, or land-agent.

It has been affirmed that 'it was not until Shelley resided in Italy that he made Plato his study'. It is quite true that he

had not read much of the dialogues of Plato in the original Greek before; but he had long been familiar with his philosophy by means of translations; and he had imbibed, at a very early age, his doctrines and theories at second hand. *Queen Mab* is the production of a Platonist incontestably; and if the great master of the academy were to read it, he would at once acknowledge the author for a disciple—for a favoured and a favourite one.

A big and burly Quaker, the proprietor of a large soke-mill, with a considerable water-power, whose profits and privileges were trenched upon by steam-mills, once said to me: 'It is perfectly certain that God Almighty never intended that his creatures should grind corn by steam!' A Quaker—a vessel of direct immediate inspiration—may readily attain to perfect certainty in such a matter; but it is not apparent how persons placed in a less commanding position than a member of the Society of Friends can obtain it.

The text of the poem demonstrates that the Divine Poet was not less familiar with the counsels of deities, than our valued friend, the miller. 'What is the use of such poetry? What is the use of any poetry?' has sometimes been asked. We may ask, in our turn, what is use? Of what use is poetry? It is of no use to the farmer, as a farmer; it will not make the grass grow; it will not keep the fly from the turnips, or mildew from the wheat; it will not drain a piece of boggy land, and so kill the rushes.

'I never read *Paradise Lost*,' said a celebrated Cambridge mathematician.

'But you must read it; everybody has read Milton's great epic.'

'Well, as it is absolutely necessary, I will read it.'

After a short respite the mathematician said to his friend: 'I have read your famous poem. I read it attentively; but what does it prove? There is more instruction in half a page of Euclid! A man might read Milton's poem a hundred, aye, a thousand times, and he would never learn that the angles at the base of an isosceles triangle are equal!'

What does *Queen Mab* prove? If the Cambridge mathematician had read it, he would have found that it proved even less than *Paradise Lost*. The whole poem is eminently, excessively spiritual; replete with imaginary, unearthly creations. It has been ignorantly stigmatized as atheistical. On the contrary, it is especially theistic, full of divinity obscurely shadowed forth. It is altogether unphilosophical, if indeed the

notes are to be accounted philosophical. The text presents throughout a strong and a strange contrast to the commentary. It glows, notwithstanding, with an ardent, a wild love of liberty, more particularly of the absolute, unrestrained liberty of thought and of speech, often extreme, sometimes extravagant, running occasionally even into rhapsody. The tendency of the verse is unfortunately oppressed and weighed down by the prose. By verse everything may be demanded; to verse everything may be conceded; for the heavenly enthusiasm, the divine rapture of the poet, his celestial and preternatural inspiration, afford an undeniable excuse, a license for all excesses. But prose is accounted of a more practical nature, and it cannot claim the like indulgence of interpretation. It was unwise, injudicious, imprudent, unfortunate, and injurious to have appended notes, so-called philosophical. The notes have little to recommend them—little that is original; they consist chiefly of excerpts from the writings of Paine, Godwin, and others. Whatever was startling in these is rendered more offensive by being set out in detached fragments, without the modifications, qualifications, conditions, and softenings, which are found in the works from whence they were taken; when they are read in their proper and natural position, with all their antecedents and consequents, whatever seems crude and repulsive is much mitigated and corrected. But when harsh paradoxes were brought out strongly in separate, segregated passages, the implied adoption of the sentiments and dogmas of their several authors becomes in its nakedness indecent and shocking; and the violent opinions promulgated in the commentary seem to give a meaning to the poem itself which does not in reality belong to it, and could never have been fairly deduced from it. The common proceeding of modern times, that the poet should be at once, and in his own person, both poet and commentator—that he should compose not only verses, but annotations upon his own verses, is preposterous.

It is hard to comprehend how Juvenal could be not merely Juvenal, but Ruperti likewise; Persius, Bond as well as Persius. The contemporaries of these two great satirical poets did not require coeval illustrations; the powerful verses of the vigorous, unsparing satirists were sufficiently intelligible. It was only through lapse of time, change of circumstances and social conditions, and the failure of various sources of information, that notes became necessary, in order to make plain what before had been plain enough of itself to every instructed and intelligent

reader. The self-annotating poet would compel us to imagine that Virgil was Servius, as well as Virgil; and that Pindar was the author of the excellent and copious scholia upon his exalted odes, as well as of the odes themselves; that Homer was Didymus, or even Eustathius, and composed the voluminous commentary on his divine poems, called the *Horn of Amalthea*, which is usually ascribed to the most erudite Archbishop of Salonichi. The *Georgics* and the *Works and Days* would probably have been less acceptable to Roman and Grecian readers, if they had been loaded at their first advent with heavy ballast, like Darwin's ponderous commentary on his *Loves of the Plants*. A poet who cannot write verses, that do not need a perpetual comment to render them comprehensible, is certainly not competent to write verses; he should confine himself to the more congenial and humbler duty of writing notes upon the verses of others. Such a prosaic poet is apt to betray himself, and to forget that he is not writing notes when he should be writing verses. A historian who explains his meaning, not in the text, but at the foot of his pages, will probably produce very good notes, but a very indifferent history.

It will be necessary to return to the notes on *Queen Mab*, and to speak hereafter of the purposes to which they were foolishly applied and fraudulently perverted: insomuch so, that his queen proved to be:

A fiend, a fairy, pitiless and rough:  
A wolf. Nay, worse!

Shelley had every qualification that a poet ought to possess, the highest qualifications in the most luxuriant and lavish abundance; but few, or none, of those which constitute a patient, painful, careful commentator. He lived and moved and had his being under the absolute, despotical empire of a vivid, fervid fancy, as his illusion respecting elephantiasis demonstrates. The legendary tales and popular traditions, which he had heard as a child, had taken complete possession of his imagination at a very early age, such as the marvels of the Forest of St. Leonard in Sussex; of St. Leonard, the godson of Clovis; the recluse, the solitary, the hermit; the inhabitant of the forests of the Limousin; the deliverer of prisoners, and the slayer of huge serpents. It was under the last attribute that he was chiefly venerated. The mountains and waterfalls of Wales and Cumberland, the English and Irish lakes leave their image on the fancy and memory of all who behold them; that the impression of these striking objects

was deeper and more sensible in him than in an ordinary spectator, is undeniable; and he gave many and frequent proofs how profoundly the resistless beauties of these miracles of nature had entered into his inmost soul, and had become integral portions of himself and of his existence. But the poetic faculty of turning himself mentally into the subject of his poem, of metamorphosing himself internally into an attendant spirit, into Titania, Queen Mab herself, was conspicuous and astonishing. This faculty, I apprehend—for, claiming no fellowship myself with poets, I speak on this topic doubtingly and under correction—is common to all true poets. In trifling matters, moreover, which were unconnected with, and unworthy of, poetic themes, he could become, I should say rather he became, involuntarily and unconsciously, the very personage of whom any remarkable incident was related, however trivial it might be, that forcibly struck his impressible soul. It would be tedious to offer many examples, and improper not to present any: two or three instances may be given; the more insignificant they are the more plainly will they illustrate his disposition and habit to adopt the situation, the feelings, the colour of other persons.

I told Bysshe one day that I had been lately in society where shorthand had become the subject of conversation. He was not himself a proficient in this art, he would never have had the patience to learn it; but he would sometimes take up a piece of paper covered with writing in shorthand, and holding it commonly the wrong way upwards, he would gaze upon it a long time in mute amazement. Some shorthand writer was mentioned, I told him, not a professional stenographer, but a man of learning and letters, a person of great talent and not less eccentricity. He wrote shorthand much, and seeking to improve a useful art, he wrote shorter and shorter, and abbreviated daily more and more, and however little he might write, and however much he might abbreviate, he was always able to read his notes with equal, or nearly equal, facility. At last he carried his abbreviation to such an extent that he wrote absolutely nothing. Some said that he still continued to read what he had written, or rather what he had not written. According to others, he was greatly astonished when he had put down nothing whatever, not a single character, not one mark, on taking up his notebook, after the interval of a few days, to find that he was unable to decipher the blank pages. I have often seen Bysshe sitting with a piece of paper in his hand, his eyes fixed intently on the uninscribed leaf, seriously and earnestly studying



it. It was evident that he had been changed inwardly into the surprised and disappointed abbreviator, vainly trying to recall what had never existed. Once whilst he was thus occupied he anxiously inquired:

‘Who invented shorthand?’

‘Tiro, it is believed.’

‘And who was Tiro, pray?’

‘He was Cicero’s clerk.’

‘Was Tiro really the name of Cicero’s clerk?’

‘Yes! And Tiro, Oh! was no bad name for the clerk of so famous an orator! How tired the poor fellow must have been listening all day to his master’s copious eloquence!’

Soon afterwards he was sitting alone in a corner, his countenance expressive of extreme dejection, and the utmost weariness. ‘Oh! Tiro, Oh!’ he suddenly exclaimed, yawning aloud, yawning as heartily as if he had heard out the whole of the orations against Verres. His lively fancy had transmuted him into the swunk freedman, and in the spirit he had been in the Senate, or the Forum, where he had been bored to death by the endless prosing of the great master of Roman eloquence.

‘But Tiro was not a mere clerk, an amanuensis; he was a person of ability, of learning! yes, and of considerable ingenuity, for he was the inventor of shorthand.’ ‘That was a great invention, was it not?’ ‘It was, but possibly he sometimes thought that of short speeches would have been a still greater!’ Shelley abhorred a pun. ‘It snaps the thread of discourse, blows out the candle, and puts an end at once to all conversation. It is like a troublesome and odious insect, a wasp. No! It wants the dignity of a wasp, it is a mosquito, a gnat! But you can do anything with me, you can sometimes even reconcile me to a pun!’ Shelley used to pick the turpentine off fir-trees, and eat it with a relish, or in walking through a pine wood he would apply his tongue to a larch, and lick it as it oozed in a liquid state from the bark. I never met with any one else who had the same taste. I have expostulated with him on the subject, and of course in vain; and I once related to him a little apologue, which was rather more efficacious. I was once at a ball, a very pleasant one it was, and we were all dancing away nerrily, but we were obliged to desist, for all on a sudden the fiddlers stopped in the middle of a tune; we told them to play on, but they answered, ‘We cannot; we cannot go on with our music, because that rascal, Bysshe, has eaten up all our rosin!’ Sometimes when he was creeping stealthily up to a fir-tree, that

he might lick it, my fable of the poet and the fiddler would come into his head, and he would turn aside laughing. The broken up ball, the interrupted country dance, the enraged musicians, the whole scene appeared in a moment before his eyes. 'And so you were obliged to give up dancing? Pray what did your partner say? How did she like it? Was she not much disappointed? Was she not very angry with me?' It has often happened that I being so much with the Divine Poet, being constantly indeed in his company, whenever my avocations would permit, was taken for him. Not that we were at all like one another, but persons who knew who we were, who knew the two friends, but did not know which was which, frequently addressed me for him, persons of both sexes; and this occurred during the whole period of our intimacy.

I sometimes heard extraordinary things which I will not repeat, inasmuch as the communications were made in confidence, although it was a mistaken confidence, yet never misplaced. I have many times been accosted in society—in elegant society—as Mr. Shelley; sometimes I at once rectified the error, but sometimes, through a curiosity, not altogether inexcusable, I hope, I have suffered the delusion to continue for a while.

'You are Mr. Shelley, are you not?'

'Well, and what then?'

I am happy to add, that when I explained myself, no confusion, no embarrassment ensued. I was esteemed a faithful Achates; what had been confided was not meant for my ear, but for that of Eneas; whether Dido, the queen, or the celestial Venus herself, or her companions, the Graces, or some half goddess, one of her attendant nymphs, spoke to me, as if I were of a heavenly origin, I have answered thus, and perhaps not imprudently: 'I am glad you think so favourably of my friend; I will tell him what you say'.

'Pray do; you will not forget!'

It is probable that Bysshe was now and then in like manner taken for his friend; but I never was informed by him, that this had actually happened. One misapprehension was of so comical a character that it ought to be related; and since, most assuredly, the Loves and Graces were not concerned in the matter, there can be no scruples of delicacy in telling the adventure just as it fell out. I called at his lodgings one afternoon in the summer to walk together, as we were wont. He was not at home, but he had left a message for me, that if I went to the residence of a common friend, I should not fail to find him there. I at once

repaired thither, and was kindly received, as I invariably was. He had not arrived, but if I would stay to dinner I should doubtless see him, for he would come, if not to dinner, for certain in the course of the evening. I readily consented to the proposal, and I sat chatting in the drawing-room, hearing the news of the day, and much admiration and many commendations of my incomparable friend, such as I invariably heard wherever he was known. A bell gave warning that dinner would be served in half an hour, and I was conducted upstairs into the front bedroom to wash my hands. Whilst I was thus employed two ill-looking fellows burst abruptly into the room; one of them locked the door, and set his back against it, telling me that he arrested me; that I was his prisoner. He was a short, stout man. The other, a long, lean fellow, showed me a writ, and presented me with a copy of it.

‘What does all this mean?’ I asked.

‘You know very well, you are Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley!’

‘You are pleased to say that I am.’

‘We know very well that you are the defendant; you need not try to persuade us that you are not!’

‘Then I will not try!’

Upon this the bailiffs became rather insolent, and were inclined to be abusive. I finished washing myself and then sat down by the window; the men stood in the middle of the room growling and grumbling. In ten minutes, or a quarter of an hour, there was a gentle tap at the door; the man who had locked it opened it—a spare, white-faced fellow dressed in black, like an undertaker’s man, entered. He looked at me with surprise, staring hard, and whispered something to the bailiffs, who seemed still more astonished than he was. They then threw open the door and told me I was at liberty, and might depart; it was a mistake. John Doe and Richard Roe, and their friend in mourning, began to offer excuses, explanations, and apologies, assuring me that they always acted on the best information, and seldom made mistakes. I did not answer, but walked down to dinner in silence. How long they remained in the bedroom, whether they were converted by the influences of the locality to a vegetable diet, and induced to return to nature, or what became of these worthies I know not, for I never fell in with any of the party again.

The arrest, as I afterwards learnt, was for the price of the good Harriet’s fine, new carriage. After such an indignity, and in order to wipe off the stigma, I ought to have had a ride, and a

good long one, too, in the carriage; but I had not that satisfaction; I never even saw the vehicle, nor heard of it, indeed, except on this occasion. Whenever any act of signal folly, extraordinary indiscretion and insane extravagance was to be perpetrated, I was never informed of it, and certainly there was no obligation to tell me. And without doubt it was better that it should be so, in order that the foster-child of the Muses might fulfil his high destinies; if he could have followed the humble suggestions of ordinary prudence—if he could have been guided by commonplace advice and common sense, the tenor of his innocent, guileless life would have been more tranquil, but prosaic, the poetical elements being starved and stinted.

It is a well-founded and just maxim, that things are best known from their opposites. It is also true, that many things which are most dissimilar, have yet some strong and striking point of resemblance: it is true, moreover, of persons.

I have frequently instituted in my own mind a comparison between two people, with whom I was well acquainted, and who appear to have been the most unlike of mankind. Each of the parties would have been shocked and deeply offended at being likened to the other; each would have felt an antipathy for the other, and an invincible repugnance to be brought into contact, or collision. The ardent and zealous admirers of both, being equally bigoted in their respective views, would have been displeased and alarmed at the imputation of the slightest and most distant resemblance; and yet there was in many respects the strongest similarity.

It would have been practicable, and perhaps profitable, to have written the lives of both these distinguished individuals, and to have drawn, after the manner of Plutarch, an ethical parallel between them; a parallel, or comparison of the lives of my incomparable friend, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and of my justly celebrated relative, poor Granville Sharp.

Amongst my earliest and firmest recollections are the numerous and wonderful particulars which I continually heard of my 'Cousins Sharp', and the many peculiarities which I witnessed myself in such of the members of that very remarkable family whom I had seen and known. 'Your Cousin Sharp.' The affectionate appellation, 'Cousin', was still in frequent use in the North of England, when I was a boy; and it was adopted sometimes when its application was not strictly correct. We could certainly claim no consanguinity with the blood of the Sharps: they were the grandchildren of Dr. John Sharp, Arch-

bishop of York, who was the son of a woolstapler in the West Riding of Yorkshire; but I believe some affinity, some connexion by marriage, subsisted; but I do not at present remember what it was, and it is immaterial. Poor Granville was long and well known for many ingenious and original, but whimsical speculations, of a description totally alien and averse from the poetical and philosophical fancies of Shelley. He rendered himself illustrious by his crusade against and victory over the slave trade and slavery, and he won thereby a monument among the renowned dead in Westminster Abbey. Poor Granville abolished slavery; others, more worldly wise and practical men, who sought and found their own advantage in it, carried out the details; and finally, as is uniformly the case in all great changes, a rabble rout of impostors and mountebanks shouted in triumph at the ultimate consummation of his success. But the meek, single-hearted, innocent old man, of infinite singularity and credulity, and entire simplicity, did the deed. To relate his successful progress from the famous case of Somerset, the negro, to his last act in that career, would be a long story and quite foreign to my present purpose. At the time when I first came to London, the venerable apostle of negro emancipation resided in chambers in the Temple, a solitary bachelor; indeed, he in a manner died there. I had the happiness to see occasionally, as a young man, one whom I had known as a schoolboy; and I have passed fresh from Granville to Shelley, and from Shelley to Granville. How different, and yet how like! The thought soon struck me forcibly, and it grew in strength. Both were equally impressible and unimpressible; both alike inaccessible to reason, with more than a tinge of fanaticism, alike bigoted to opposite and discordant fancies; of ascetic lives, more than Spartan frugality, temperance, and austerity; harsh to themselves alone, to others charitable, generous, profuse, lavish. Of childish credulity, ready to believe, because it was impossible; full of rash reliance, and a blind credence in the professions of the unworthy. But the most remarkable point of resemblance was this, that both these celebrated men, always desiring to do nothing but good, did in fact, nothing but mischief. My poor Cousin Granville, the hoary-headed apostle of benevolence, ruined, utterly ruined and destroyed, the finest, richest, and happiest of the dependencies of the Crown of Great Britain. It is true that the youthful, philosophical philanthropist never took any serious, resolute, permanent part in public affairs, and therefore never had an opportunity to do mischief by wholesale

and on a grand scale. But his hasty, inconsiderate bounty in private life, by encouraging laziness, promoting dependence, and teaching the objects of his indiscriminate generosity to indulge unreasonable expectations, was the fertile source of much evil; and by his lavish charity he hampered, impoverished, and punished himself, and suffered needless and unmerited poverty and privations. Not only poor Granville, but the whole family of Sharp were equally culpable in this respect. I have heard painfully laughable examples of their beneficent indiscretions, demonstrating that, in an artificial state of society, a little knowledge of human nature and of the world is indispensable to prevent the open-handed and open-hearted giver inflicting injuries by his gifts; something of the subtlety of the serpent must be combined with the simplicity of the dove in the distribution of eleemosynary funds. In early life I heard histories of the Christian achievements, many of them very ludicrous, of this excellent family, more particularly in connection with the much vaunted charities at Bamburgh. If it should ever be deemed expedient by authority, as the public voice loudly declares that it is, to institute a searching inquiry into the disposal of the munificent bequests of Lord Crewe, and to learn from his trustees in what manner their ample funds and extensive patronage have been expended and exercised; the real nature, actual working, and ultimate consequences of the proceedings of the amiable house of Sharp will be laid open; and whether their dealings with this large mass of property form an exception to the ordinary results of their indiscreet benevolence, will fully appear.

An open, public inquiry is required, if any real good is to be effected; the futile and childish investigations of charity commissioners with closed doors, have proved at best useless. The Charity Commission, it has been said, commenced in folly, and being laid hold of by the strong hand of an able and unscrupulous man, terminated in knavery.

If there were points of contact, of strong and striking similarity, between these two illustrious individuals, as most assuredly there were, there were also points of repulsion, of utter and total dissimilarity. No temperament was ever less poetical than that of Granville Sharp. His own peculiar course had been clearly marked out for him, and he accomplished it nobly. It was fanciful and fantastical enough, in truth, but not imaginative. Urania had imparted to him largely a knowledge of heavenly things; but neither she nor her sacred sisters had

touched his pure and holy lips with a live coal kindled on the altar of Apollo.

It was wisely ordained that Shelley also should fulfil his destinies—his high destinies, which carried him away impetuously in a different and opposite direction. It was certainly ordained that he should become a divine poet. The poetic faculty is surely divine. A poet is a maker—a creator; and creation is the highest power and energy of divinity. To the poet is granted a portion of the loftiest and most wonderful attributes of the Supreme Creator: he is constituted and appointed a creator; and this, poor Granville never was.

It was my fortune to be once, and only once, in the company of a personage who has shone forth conspicuously in Bysshe's correspondence, under two very different phases; she had been for some time an inmate of his solitary mansions in Wales. At her first coming to dwell with him in the desert, she was warmly recommended to correspondents, and more particularly to William Godwin, and hailed with a kind of angelic salutation, as blessed amongst women; as a tower-proof, fire-proof, bomb-proof blue; free from and above all prejudices; and a resolute champion of the rights of women. The author of *St. Leon* seems to have received the recommendation of the author of *St. Irvyn* rather coldly. A grocer never likes figs; and possibly he had already heard quite enough about the *Rights of Women*: he did not take the bait. At a period not long subsequent, she is stigmatized as dirty, androgynous, and, indeed, a brown demon.

I called, one Sunday morning, I think at some hotel, to walk and dine. It was soon after their return from Wales; and in due order it ought to have been noticed before; but the chronology of such an interview need not be exact. The heroine was tall and thin, bony and masculine, of a dark complexion; and the symbol of male wisdom, a beard, was not entirely wanting. She was neither young nor old; not handsome—not absolutely ill-looking. She had been a governess and a schoolmistress, as was sufficiently indicated by a prim, formal, didactic manner and speech. At first she possessed some influence over the young couple; but the charming Eliza would not tolerate any influence but her own. She had worked upon Harriet's feelings, and the good Harriet had succeeded in making his former favourite odious to Bysshe. It had been finally arranged that she was to depart—to go away that very evening—which was boasted of as a great blessing; and such, perhaps, it might have been, if there had been any valid and available security, that

another and a greater bore would not soon succeed to the vacancy.

Bysshe could not walk with me; he was particularly engaged, as often happened, to go somewhere, and to perform some indispensable and important thing.

I can fly, or I can run,  
Quickly to the green earth's end,  
Where the bow'd welkin slow doth bend;  
And from thence can soar as soon  
To the corners of the moon.

Harriet had a bad headache; so I was summarily condemned to walk with the two spinsters.

Accordingly, in execution of my sentence, I was turned over to them; and with the brown demon on my right arm and the black diamond on my left, we went forth into St. James's Park, and walked there, and in the neighbouring parks, for a long time, a very long time. 'These were my jewels', as Cornelia proudly exclaimed.

In the beginning, the fair rival, the dark rival, quarrelled with one another across me, to whom, however, they were both exceedingly civil—deferential, I may say. The lovely Eliza attacked the foe with haughty contempt; the bearded preceptress defended herself and offended her enemy with meek contumacy. I never saw Eliza so much alive before or since. I never knew her come out so decidedly. For some time, there was hit for hit delivered on both sides with calm, soft acrimony, but by degrees the jangling abated, and the angel on my left collapsed; she relapsed into her normal condition of languor, of languor at the last gasp. I then turned to the angel on my right, and interrogated her about the rights of women, respectfully requesting to be informed what they were. She received my request graciously, and immediately complied with it. The accents of wisdom began to flow in a gentle, continuous stream from her bearded lips. I must confess I could not comprehend what these rights were; or, to speak more correctly, I could not discover what were the obstacles that prevented females, who valued the peculiar whims and fancies termed by her their rights, from indulging them. I represented my view of the matter to the scholastic Minerva, and she could not deny that all women, emancipated from the control of parents and guardians, might act as they pleased in such matters.

The conversation, which went on agreeably enough with Wisdom on my right side, was extremely distasteful to Beauty



on my left. Eliza knew nothing of the rights of women, or of anything else. She was therefore condemned to a long and ignominious silence, whilst the grand principles by which feminine felicity is to be insured were powerfully and elaborately expounded.

‘How could you talk to that nasty creature so much? How could you permit her to prate so long to you?’ said the lovely Eliza, peevishly, when she took her arm out of mine at the door, on returning home to dinner. ‘Why did you encourage her? Harriet will be seriously displeased with you, I assure you; she will be very angry!’

The indignation of the good Harriet, if it really was excited, must have been too big for utterance: I never heard of it. She merely asked: ‘Were you not tired of the brown demon?’

Most infernally! might have been an appropriate answer; and to say the truth, which I did not dare to say, I was equally weary of angel and devil.

Dinner came off tranquilly, and the evening passed away pleasantly enough, for it was fully understood on all sides that she was to take her departure that night, which arrangement apparently was doubtful in the morning. There being little conversation during tea, I ventured to inquire again about the rights of women. The Goddess of Reason began incontinently to lecture with fluency and animation. Presently Bysshe quitted his chair, and came and stood before her, listening with attention, and looking enthusiastic, as if his former interest had in some measure revived. The sisters eyed him with manifest displeasure, as a person holding treasonable communications with a public enemy.

## CHAPTER XXIV

At the appointed hour a coach was called, and the Defender of the Faith and of her sex took her leave of us freely, quietly, and civilly; and being fairly gone with all her boxes and band-boxes never to return—and she never did return—the whole party believed that they were very happy, having had a good deliverance, having been freed from a load that had become of late intolerable. For my own part, not having felt the burthen, I could not participate in their joy. She appeared to me a fair average specimen of a schoolmistress, and well adapted in every respect for the employment, which she had long exercised, and might doubtless long continue to exercise with advantage. Certainly there was nothing about her to justify either the raptures at meeting her, or the excessive delight at parting. I could only marvel, as I have constantly marvelled, at the thick-coming fancies of my imaginative friend.

I never saw the Brown Demon again; I never heard more of her. Save that the lovely yet spiteful Eliza, who could not soon forgive, once whispered: ‘If you only knew how filthily dirty she is, you would not come near her!’ This censure might mean no more, than that the unprejudiced, intellectual being does not brush her hair nearly long enough; does not spend more, would you believe it, than eight hours a day ‘in sleeking her soft alluring locks’!

The correspondence shows that instruction in the rights of women was not obtained without a valuable consideration; but the amount does not appear. The regular system of organized plunder, of this hereafter, to which he was afterwards subject until the end of his life, and, indeed, even longer, had not yet commenced. Two or three of his more enlightened friends, it is true, advocates of the community of goods, simple creatures, utterly ignorant of the value of money, and sceptics as to the rights of property, had contrived already, now and then, to extract moderate sums out of his ill-furnished purse; and no doubt his Irish allies borrowed of him. The wrongs of an oppressed, injured, and insulted country could never be redressed by her patriotic and disinterested sons without a little private

peculation, without levying toll. It was difficult, impossible indeed, to obtain a correct estimate of the spoil, the spoilers were not communicative; there was a certain secrecy and a mystery about Bysshe, which were impenetrable.

It is a popular superstition in some countries that the goat passes one hour of the twenty-four every day in the infernal regions. However attentively that wild and active creature may be watched, it always disappears, it is said, during that period, and it is impossible to find it in its hour of absence, however diligent the search may be; wherever the goat may be, it always knows the shortest way to the Shades below; and if it be tied up, or otherwise confined, it is confidently asserted, and this at least is not improbable, that the animal grows exceedingly uneasy and restless.

I was often reminded of this picturesque and poetical legend by the habits of Shelley. He used to vanish in as abrupt and inexplicable a manner as a goat; to remove himself as effectually beyond the reach of pursuit, whenever he was at liberty; and restraint was not less irksome to him than to the free denizen of the mountains. Those who were acquainted with him could entertain no suspicion that his visit was ever paid to the infernal deities; his course assuredly was not downwards. The young poet was, peradventure, admitted for a season to celestial converse; his nature being rather demoniacal than human, he became the associate of higher intelligences; like the shepherd of Ascra, the Muses themselves were personally present with him. He returned to mortal intercourse awestricken, having refreshed his fancy by the sight of glorious things, which he never revealed to others, not even to his most intimate friends.

I have sometimes seen him standing a long while, watching a goat patiently, and following after it, for I had related the superstitious legend to him, and it captivated his fancy and pleased him prodigiously; and he would eye a goat, that came unexpectedly towards him, eagerly, and inquire with penetrating, asking glances: 'What news from Hades?'

The goat is a Dionysiacal quadruped; habitually given to scale Parnassus, to spring boldly from crag to crag on Helicon, to climb with ease to the highest summits of all the mountains of the poets; a sharer in Bacchic, Orphic, Eleusinian, and other mysteries; it is consentaneous with poetic reason and usages for poets, as well as for the mighty Pan and his satyrs, to trace affinities and similarities with the goat.

Shelley's delight was to read Homer, and it grew and

strengthened with his years. He had a copy of the Grenville Homer, bound in russia, in two volumes, the Iliad in one, and the Odyssey in the other; one of these volumes was continually in his hand. It would be a curious problem to calculate how many times he read the whole through. He devoured in silence, with greedy eyes, the goodly and legible characters often by firelight, seated on the rug, on a cushion, or a footstool, straining his sight, and striking a flame from the coals with the shovel, or whichever of the fireirons he could first seize upon, remaining in front of the fire until the cheek next to it assumed the appearance of a roasted apple. And he would read some sublime passage aloud, if there was any one at hand to listen, with extreme rapidity, animation, and energy, raising his shrill voice, until it equalled the crowing of a cock; nor would he cease before he reached the end of the book, and then closing it, he laid it gently upon the ground, and lifting up his eyes to the ceiling, he exclaimed with heartfelt pleasure, 'Hah!' remaining for some minutes in an attitude of veneration, wholly absorbed in pleasure and admiration.

It is for such readers that great poets write! In the same unceremonious posture and position he would pore over pages of some moralist, or metaphysician, whether he were an idealist, or a materialist. The close attention which he bestowed upon the advocates of materialism was exemplary. It is so easy, and so agreeable to believe, without examination, or inquiry, whatever we hear, and more especially what we read in books, whatever in short we see in print, that we can never be sufficiently grateful to those meritorious persons, who will kindly take the trouble to doubt of, or dispute, anything: the claims of scepticism upon our gratitude are not duly recognized. The world is deeply indebted also to epicureans and materialists; it is a great benefit to mankind, that in every generation a small body of innocent, estimable, and apathetical men should be found ready to demonstrate practically, that their narrow sect cannot possibly flourish; that we cannot live upon this world alone.

Plato and Aristotle have fed thousands, but to whom did Epicurus ever give a morsel of bread? It is a mark of an ignorant, an ill-bred fellow, to argue pertinaciously about facts, and to contradict every assertion respecting ordinary occurrences; so it is, on the other hand, the test of a scholar and a man of true genius to bring opinions fairly into review, and especially to cause those principles, which are held commonly

to be the most firmly settled, to be discussed anew, by insinuating doubts, or suggesting something, that seems to be inconsistent with them; and gallantly to encourage the ventilation of the elements, and an examination of the foundations of knowledge, by offering to sustain the weaker side. To encourage those who would practise the art of taking aim, if we may allude to a favourite pastime, by throwing up his hat, that they may take a shot at it; when a person is so courteous, it is surely most unkind, as some churls are wont to do, to discharge a pistol in his face!

During his protracted residence in London, and the vicinity of London, in the years 1813 and 1814, an auspicious, beneficial, and happy period, we had the good fortune to form a most agreeable intimacy with certain amiable and elegant friends and associates, whose favourite studies were the Italian language and literature; some of whom even had formerly resided in Italy—a privilege which had been less generally enjoyed then, than now; and that advantage being more rare, they had profited more by it. It was confined in those days almost exclusively to persons of a certain station, of a liberal education, of ample leisure, competent fortune, and cultivated minds; their position in society had been an introduction to the first people in the countries which they had visited, and these were of a far higher order than are at present to be met with in a land, that has since been severely scourged by cruel and noxious revolutions and violent political commotions fraught with ruin to individuals, and manifold and desolating troubles. By their salutary example, by gentle persuasions, and a soft and benign influence, they called the attention of my friend and myself to a participation in their darling pursuits; and they powerfully promoted by their precious advice, assistance, and instructions, the invitation which we at once readily accepted, and our thoughts and our reading soon took the direction pointed out to us by our tasteful guides. I procured a sufficient apparatus of approved grammars and dictionaries, and bestowed much of my leisure upon them; Bysshe, a king in intellect, had always at his command a short and royal road to knowledge. It seemed to a superficial observer, that he rejected and despised the grammar and the dictionary, and all the ordinary aids of a student; this to a certain extent was the case, but to a certain extent only; he was impatient of such tardy methods of progression; nevertheless he sometimes availed himself of them, and when he condescended to be taught, like a mere mortal,

which assuredly he was not, his eagle glance, his comprehensive grasp, his inconceivable quickness, and miraculous powers and faculty of apprehension, enabled him to seize and to master in minutes what his less highly gifted fellow-learners acquired in hours, or days, or weeks.

With much pleasure and profit, and not without a certain edification, we read together the fine poem of Tasso; and we kept together, side by side, in this our first exploit and invasion of the lovely language of a lovely land. There was nothing in the slow progress of the long siege of the holy city, or in the quiet episodes, by which the principal narrative is varied, to stimulate his intense and insatiable curiosity, or provoke his constitutional impatience. At the termination of our joint perusal, the slip of paper was carefully placed in the handsome volume to mark our progress, and whenever we resumed our united study I saw that it had been honourably suffered to remain at the page where we had left off; there had been no forestalling, no stealing a march. We thus proceeded steadily together, by an equable progression we advanced, and by regular approaches we took the sacred city, and finished the poem, our first task.

With mingled feelings of pleasure and regret we both quitted the graceful, tender, pious epic, being in our hearts more than half Crusaders, and not altogether indisposed to enlist under the consecrated banners of Godfrey.

When we came to our second author, it was different—our course of conjoint study no longer ran smooth; it was deranged; the partnership was broken up. The same slow rate of travelling would no longer satisfy my impatient colleague; Ariosto had excited, fascinated him. Bysshe soon discovered that the realms of romance and the intercourse of Paladins were his own proper, peculiar element: we could no longer keep together in our chivalry. When I had a spare hour for octave rhymes, and took down the book for our lesson, I found that my adventurous conrade had gone ahead a canto or two; or, perhaps, that the mark had been transferred to another volume. In reading for the first time a composition of such overpowering, overwhelming interest—exciting, stimulating, provoking—it was absolutely impossible to wait for me, or for any one; for Roland furiously mad through love, or even for the fair Angelica herself, much more to expect the uncertain and scant leisure of a law student. The Divine Poet eagerly devoured the marvellous production of a brother poet, returning to it incessantly, and reading it through repeatedly, again and again. He spoke of the unparal-

leled poem with wild rapture during our walks, and read aloud to me detached passages with energy and enthusiastic delight; but he could not control his feelings enough for us to go through the *Orlando Furioso* hand in hand, as we had marched to the conquest and liberation of Jerusalem: he soon left me to find my way, as I best might, out of the enchanted forest. The easy, flowing style of Ariosto presents fewer difficulties than the elaborate stanzas of Tasso, and was propitious to his speedy way. I proceeded alone steadily and methodically, grammar and dictionary at hand, and by the doubtful light of Hoole's translation, whenever my other occupations permitted, to traverse forty-six cantos, comprised in six volumes, a long transit, it is true, but the charmed reader wishes it was much longer.

In extenuation of my comparative indifference and insensibility to the enchantments of the divine Ariosto, and in justice to myself, I must be permitted to add, that I was already acquainted, familiar indeed, with the story and incidents, having read the entire poem more than once, as it is rendered by the aforesaid John Hoole; read it with pleasure in a handsome octavo edition, adorned with engravings, and well bound, a prize book won by a schoolfellow at some former school; six goodly volumes pleasant to the memory even now, and still distinctly seen through a long vista of just fifty years.

To Bysshe it was a novelty, altogether new in matter and manner, in substance and in language; to me the language alone was unknown; he was unacquainted with the whole subject, and entirely ignorant of the tale of magic and marvels; it came upon him with all the force of a first impression, and the flood of unheard-of wonders bore him away in an irresistible torrent. We did not undertake to seek for a meaning in the abstruse and gloomy sublimity of Dante, until a subsequent period; of this in its proper place and in due course.

With respect to the other one of the four great Italian poets, of whom the numerous short poems can hardly be read through consecutively, we were sweetly and forcibly drawn towards him by a peculiar attraction, and were tied fast to his verses, spell-bound by a potent charm.

A most engaging lady of our circle had surrendered herself a fair prey to a kind of sweet melancholy, arising, as far as I could discover, from causes purely imaginary; a pensive, languid sadness, which gave a character, a grace, an interest to her society and conversation, but did not interfere in any way with the

enjoyment of life, and the fullest exercise of the mental and animal functions. She required consolation, she said; she sought it, and found it at last in the poetry of Petrarch; and therefore she invariably began the day by reading attentively and repeatedly, as soon as she awoke in the morning, often learning it by heart—a sonnet, or canzone—going thus regularly through the book; meditating upon it; revolving it in her mind, and, as it were, feeding upon it in her soul. For a considerable period we saw her almost every day, at some time of the day; and soon after meeting it was quite in course to inquire, what was the sonnet of the day, and the desponding fair one immediately repeated it with becoming emotion; or producing her pocket Petrarch, which she always carried about with her, and which by express testamentary direction was to be buried with her, she read it aloud with feeling; but if it was too touching to be thus given forth, she handed the minute volume to the inquirer, pointing out the proper poetic lesson in Love's scripture appointed for the day. She eloquently and not unskilfully expounded the text, which is frequently obscure and needs exposition, neatly clearing up the difficulties and displaying feelingly the beauties of sentiment and expression. She warmly recommended us, and all with whom she conversed, and who were likely to profit by good advice, to begin every day, as she herself did, by a snatch of tenderness. It would cast a pretty and a pleasing shade of sadness over the whole day; upon its business and its pleasures, mellowing and mitigating its joys, and softening and relieving its sorrows. Like all zealous persons, she sometimes seemed disposed to recommend that, by legislative enactment, all loyal subjects should be enjoined and required to begin in this manner every day of their lives.

Shelley assured her authoritatively, that when there was a perfect republic, the day would uniformly be opened in this fashion, and the assurance contented her.

Besides laying open to us the poem of the day; unfolding its true signification, and bringing it down to the level of our comprehension, in which kind offices she never failed; some other choice passage was selected from the pocket volume, or from a larger and more legible edition, and it received, in like manner, a full explanation. Thus were we initiated gradually and efficiently, and in a most agreeable manner, in the mysteries of the amatory verses of the great poet of love. Petrarch, in a word, was her hero, the best and greatest of men, as Laura de Sades was the happiest of women; thrice and four times blessed



to have been so beloved, besighed, and besonnetted by the prince of poets and of lovers. Bysshe entered at once fully into her views, and caught the soft infection, breathing the tenderest and sweetest melancholy, as every true poet ought. For my own part I was sensible of the value of her teaching, and was grateful for it; I felt and acknowledged the exquisite beauty, the admirable qualities of the great poet; and yet, with the levity of youth, I found pleasure in teasing her about her favourite. When she spoke with enthusiasm of Petrarch and his amours, I ventured to hint that possibly his connexion with Laura was not so pure as she supposed. But this position was untenable; moreover it was ungenerous to suggest, even in jest, the possibility of frailty in the spotless Laura. I contented myself, therefore, with advancing that his passion was very tender and pretty, but it was unreal, a mere poetical figment, moonshine. He was in fact a great, fat prebendary of Padua, who after a hearty breakfast attended to the secular business of the day, particularly to ordering dinner, and went to his cathedral and sang in the choir. He came home, and made as good a dinner as was consistent with his intention of making a still better supper. He took a nap in his easy chair, woke up, and neighing after his neighbour's wife, wrote of his love, his anguish, and despair, until the sun went down. He then took a walk in the cool of the evening; came home and made a tremendous supper, going within a hair's breadth of indigestion, and desiring to defy the gout. Having eaten and drunken well, the amorous ecclesiastic took sweet counsel together with a plump, tidy, young housekeeper, who was Ilia and Egeria to him; all that Laura herself could have been to the thundering canon, and more. Such was his Platonic passion!

The lady laughed at the profane sally, but admitted that with much gross exaggeration, there might be some little truth in the picture.

'Yet, can you conceive the author of that exquisite sonnet,' and she repeated it in a most touching manner—'can you conceive him ordering dinner?'

'Yes, I can, and a very good one too!'

'Can you imagine the person who composed that canzone,' and she read a part of it, 'doing what you said he did?'

'What? do you mean kissing his housekeeper?'

'Yes!'

'Yes, I can, and very affectionately, too!'

Bysshe looked not a little shocked and hurt at first by what he

considered an indecent irrision of the sacred character of the lover-poet; but he felt and owned at last, that it was not unreasonable or unnatural, in the course of a Platonic attachment of forty years, that he should require a little of such consolation. Petrarch says himself that he loved Laura for forty years; he loved her for twenty years living, and for twenty years dead. And he thought the countenance of the tuneful canon, as represented in the numerous engravings of him after the portrait of the celebrated Giotto, was sensual; he disliked the expression, and often found fault with it, insisting either that it could not be a faithful likeness, or that the subject of the picture was not what he is generally believed to have been. But jokes apart, Petrarch is in truth a divine poet. As he loved and admired his Laura for full forty years, so have I humbly loved and admired him for the like, for a still longer period. I am still young enough, thank God! to be delighted by his immortal verses; and when I read them, it is impossible not to think with esteem and gratitude of the charming friend, through whose kindness I was first introduced to him. The relative merits, however, of poets are measured by different standards of comparison. 'Would you suppose that much of Mr. Wordsworth's poetry was written in the dark; in total darkness? You will hardly credit it, but it is true, perfectly true!' a fussy, foolish little fellow, a banker in a country town, once said to me. 'Many of the finest passages in his best poems, were written in the dark, when it was as dark as pitch; it is truly astonishing! You do not believe it; I cannot ask you to believe it; but it is true, he told me so himself!'

He explained by informing me, that the Lake bard was accustomed to place a pencil and paper by his bedside, and when a bright thought came to him between the sheets, he wrote it down instantly without striking a light, which was a slow process in an age of tinder-boxes, now obsolete, allowing time for fancies even less volatile than emanations from the lakes to evaporate; and thus secured it for the benefit of posterity. Through long habit he was able to write correctly and legibly in the dark.

'Can anything be more wonderful?' asked the little banker, in conclusion.

'Yes! To write in one's sleep, and to take shorthand notes of one's dreams.'

'Really! You do not say so! I do not write shorthand myself, but I know shorthand writers can do most surprising things.'

I related this to Bysshe, who was much amused by it, and more taken by the notion of writing in the dark. He spoke



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH  
*From a print in the British Museum*



more than once of various contrivances for facilitating it, and several times in emulation, or imitation, of Wordsworth carried pencil and paper to bed with him. But he succeeded very ill in his writing; he usually lost his pencil, or his paper, or both; and when he contrived to keep them, the writing was illegible. In these days it would be superfluous to learn to write in the dark; a light is now procured instantaneously by a lucifer match, and before its contents could leak out of the least retentive memory. As Shelley could not write verses in the dark, he never produced any such poetry as is found in Wordsworth's Night Thoughts. Wordsworth's chilly fancy being warmed by three Witney blankets and a good thick counterpane, he became truly a poet; his finest thoughts were hatched in bed, having been conceived in utter, palpable darkness. 'Any man who can write verses in the dark must be a real, genuine poet; he must have it in him: there is no use in denying it!'

The sagacious little banker added: 'Only think! just consider! There are poems in Mr. Wordsworth's works, that I am not by any means sure I could have written myself, either in the daylight or in the evening, with two wax candles before me; but to have written them in the dark! There can be no mistake about him; we know very well what he is!'

We may be permitted to smile at the nightly cogitations of a poet, and at his solicitude to note them down in his bed; yet if a permanent condition of bodily blindness, as in the case of our own Milton, and of Homer, and other blind poets and prophets of antiquity, sharpened the mental vision, a temporary blindness, caused by the shades of night, may possibly impart a like acuteness, and night thoughts may really be the most poetical and the most precious. At midnight, and during the early watches of the morning, may be most rife and ripe the light and slight fictions, which poets and other writers of fables spin and weave out of themselves, like spiders.

I have often regretted that my numerous letters have not been preserved; they described graphically events, the memory of which it is now considered desirable to recall. I have lately received a scrap of a letter; I have forgotten to whom it was addressed; it was written many years after the period to which it refers, but it paints most correctly a certain sprightly bird, to whom we may surely say with Wordsworth:

For thy song, lark,  
Is strong, lark,  
Like a mountain river!

## CHAPTER XXV

May 29, 1841.

At the end of March 1813, Shelley and Harriet came from Killarney in great haste, leaving Miss Westbrook there, with a large library, but without money, that there might be no temptations to discontinue her studies.

They remained a few days at an hotel in Dover Street, and then Harriet took lodgings in Half Moon Street, accounting the situation fashionable; they stayed there several months, and then went to Pimlico to be near the B.'s, which was esteemed very desirable; and there, I think, Ianthe was born. In the August following Shelley came of age.

There was a little projecting window in Half Moon Street, in which Shelley might be seen from the street all day long, book in hand, with lively gestures and bright eyes; so that Mrs. N. said, he wanted only a pan of clear water and a fresh turf to look like some young lady's lark, hanging outside for air and song.

There were vivacious ladies even in those very remote periods, and so it happens that the human race has been continued to our days.

T. J. H.

COOKE'S HOTEL, *Wednesday morn (June, 1813).*

MY DEAREST FRIEND,

Harriet writes in this. I only desire that I were always as anxious to confer on you all possible happiness, as she is. She tells you that she invites you this evening. It will be better than our lonesome and melancholy interviews.

Your very affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I am very sure that Harriet will be as kind as ever. I could see, when I spoke to her (if my eyes were not blinded by love), that it was an error, not of the feelings, but of reason. I entreat you to come this evening. I send this by the servant, that there may be no delay.

To T. J. H.

COOKE'S HOTEL, *Friday (July, 1813).*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Medwin, the attorney of Horsham, stayed so late on the night of my promised visit, that I could not come. Last night your short note arrived, also beyond its hour, and the N.'s had already taken me with them. This night the N.'s have a party to Vauxhall; if you will call here at *nine* o'clock we will go together.

What can your notes mean; how suspicious you have become. I will not insert *one but*. Leonora has arrived. Medwin dines with me. Harriet is quite well, and her infant better.

Your affectionate friend,

To T. J. H.

P. B. SHELLEY.

Vauxhall, as it existed in 1813, was a pleasant resort enough, two or three times in a season, provided always that there was the fullest assurance of a fine evening. It was quite peculiar, unique, the only thing of the kind. For those who loved to witness a stirring scene, there were motion and gaiety, and an ample occasion of being merry by deputy. If quiet was sought, it might be found in a walk under the fine old elms; there were retired alleys, where it might be strolled peacefully for hours without interruption. The effect of the illumination, of the numerous lamps under the trees, was striking and pleasing; the countless twinkling little stars fed by humble oil, surprised eyes not yet pampered and spoiled by the superior brilliancy of gas lights. The music was sprightly and inspiring, of a coarse and homely description, but sufficient for the place and purpose, and for the tunes which were played there, and being heard at a distance, was not disagreeable to one predisposed to be amused. It was sweet to witness dancing, which the dancers evidently enjoyed so much, and to see suppers, of which the cockney and country wassailer partook with so conspicuous a relish. Arrack punch was the nectar of these celestial banquets; a generous liquor. I never drank it at Vauxhall, but at private convivial meetings I have found it a delightful beverage; in moderation harmless, beneficial indeed; a drink worthy of heroes, if not of gods. In these Elysian shades the consumption of arrack must have been prodigious; waiters were running about all the evening in every direction with smoking bowls; the fragrant fumes filled the air, cheering the brain and strengthening the chest. I was bidden to assist at such a festival as that palace of pleasure, although of long standing and far spread renown, never celebrated before or since. It was to be a triumph of female artifice,

the most proud, complete, and splendid victory of management and diplomacy that was ever achieved; the masterpiece, nay, more, the mistress-piece, of consummate guile. Not only Shelley, poet, philosopher, ascetic, hermit, stoic, Spartan, and what not, was to be gulled, to be entrapped and conveyed thither, unconscious of his doom, unsuspecting; but an innocent young Quakeress was also to be beguiled. She was to be lured into a carriage under false pretences, driven in the shades of evening with fraud and covin over Westminster Bridge, she knew not whither, and surreptitiously introduced into the gardens of Comus and Circe, into Vanity Fair, the abodes of sin and shame. Our paschal lamb, our sacrifice without spot, was neither to know whither she was going, nor where she was, nor where she had been.

We conspirators were straitly charged and commanded not to tell her; to give in answer an unvarying 'I do not know' to her inquiries as to what it was, what it all meant. We promised obedience. Shelley saw the snare; how he discovered the intrigue, I did not learn; most probably from his communications with the children; they were his intimates and confidants, and from children a secret speedily leaks out. However, he submitted meekly to his fate; and, like a great and good man as he was, he determined patiently and cheerfully to fulfil his destinies. He invited me, indeed, in all simplicity to an entertainment for which I had long been engaged; to confess the truth, I was deeply immersed and implicated in the guilt of that evening. I think he gave in to the project with less difficulty because he was aware of the deceit that was to be played upon the discreet Rachel.

I was introduced to the comely and placid offering, and she was placed under my immediate care. She made no resistance; so, without a struggle, she was quickly and quietly launched into the worldling's paradise. She admired the long vista of lamps; she admired all she saw, and with more warmth and animation than one could have anticipated. She asked me repeatedly what it was. 'I am not at liberty to tell you.' She repeated the inquiry many times, and pressed me to inform her. I was faithful to my promise, to the solemn league and covenant.

'Is it not Vauxhall?'

'I am not to tell you; you are never to know.'

'Is it so wrong, then? It is so delightful, it is a great pity it is so wrong!'

We walked about arm in arm; we went everywhere, saw



everything, and the fair victim approved of all she saw: sometimes in articulate language, and with a strength of expression that surprised me, but more commonly with a quiet murmur of pleasure, cooing like a dove. Yet she was oppressed by a certain timidity; she kept her hand fast in my arm, often pressing closely against my side: my placid, sleek, well-fed mate imparted to me some of that genial warmth out of the copious stores of animal heat with which her portly person was so abundantly furnished. When she was more especially delighted with the novelty and entertainment of the evening, she whispered in my ear imploringly, and with a pretty beseeching look: 'Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!' Those we met were commonly too much occupied with their own concerns to notice us; nevertheless, some persons viewed us with astonishment, staring hard at my companion and myself, for she was in full costume. How much soever Friends might observe on other topics, they could not cavil at her dress; that at least was perfectly unexceptionable and irreproachable. Bysshe, for his part, was very happy; entirely taken up, engrossed, captivated, by the charming lady through whose contrivance we had been brought to Vauxhall. A mere mundane critic might have declared that there was a most desperate flirtation between them; a more spiritualized observer, a poet and a philosopher like himself, would discern in their union a strong and close sympathy, and would describe and designate it as such.

The display of fireworks in those days was but a poor affair, yet the dark shade of the lofty trees gave a strong contrast and relief to the sparks, and flames, and fire. Shelley, as it will be readily believed, was passionately fond of fireworks. He often had a rocket, a Roman candle, a few squibs and Catherine wheels at hand, and he would tempt children, of the like juvenile tastes with himself, into the garden or field to let them off there. He had disappeared stealthily from the drawing-room; the cracking and fizzing under the window, and the shouts and laughter of the enraptured children, explained the motive of his absence.

We had exhilarated and fortified ourselves with large potations of generous tea before we set out on our deceitful and treacherous mission, and we returned in good time to an abundant supper, which a long promenade in the cool night air made most acceptable.

I never met with my sleek, soft, murmuring mate again; her visit to London was short, her residence was in the country.

She confided her history to me during our confidential walk; there was neither mystery nor romance in it. Rachel's father was a Quaker apothecary of the first magnitude in the west of England. 'Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!' These words were softly whispered in my ear a hundred times at least by the plump daughter of Ephraim Smooth, and they seem to be a formula which young Quakeresses use, when the engaging creatures are conscious that they are doing wrong.

I once spent some weeks at Christmastide in the country with an agreeable and accomplished family, and there I met a young Quaker lady. In her plain cap, plain kerchief, and plaited conundrums, by which the female Friends are distinguished from the rest of their sex, she was one of the loveliest creatures I ever beheld; a being of exquisite and sought out beauty. Hannah was passionately fond of chess, and I had the happiness to play with her for hours; she frequently murmured with languid delight, and when the game became peculiarly interesting, she would softly whisper, sometimes almost inaudibly, 'Friend, thou wilt not remark, lest Friends should observe!'

That strict religionists, strict moralists even, should forbid cards and games of hazard, is not unreasonable; but nobody ever plays at chess for money; it is purely a contest of skill, chance has no share in the event; what, then, can there be reprehensible in it? What is there in the noble game of kings for Friends to observe upon? Do the prim observers quarrel with the royal, aristocratic, martial titles of the pieces? Well, then, let the castles be called windmills; the knights, mounted millers, sitting on horseback above sacks of wheat; let the king be a substantial corn-factor, and the queen his wife; let the bishops be a couple of master bakers from Scotland, thorough rogues in grain; so that the designations of the several pieces may sound, not in nobility, but in knavery. The pawns might represent the Society of Friends, and being of sober uniform colours, and unassuming mien, might well stand for ordinary Quakers.

But what could the contest be? It must not be a battle, or litigation, both war and law being strictly forbidden; the struggle might be for one side to overreach the other in exchanges, to drive the harder bargain, to compel the opponent's king—corn-factor, I should say—to commit an act of bankruptcy, and being unable to avoid, answer, or cover a cheque, to be mated. One of the contending firms might be drab, the other slate-coloured, black and white being decidedly too pronounced.

Under such harmless conditions, the amiable members of the Society of Friends might safely engage in friendly struggles upon the sixty-four squares of the board of grinders, not of kings, with peace to Penn's ashes.

It is possible that Bysshe was amused at the idea of the hoax that was to be played upon the sweetly placid Rachel, and entered willingly into the scheme of mischief, but he took no concern in the execution, or in the event. He had an antipathy, a rooted aversion, an utter abhorrence of everything low and vulgar, and there is nothing so vulgar as dissent, as the preposterous impertinence of a Dissenter, who is always to be laughed at, and heartily, but never to be persecuted. I called one morning—it was on a Sunday, I think—at the house of a common friend, to meet Bysshe by appointment, for some expedition or other; he did not attend, as was too frequently the case with him; no human being, no poet was ever less punctual: he had no perception, no notion of time; a divine nature lives not in time, but in eternity. Although I did not meet him on that occasion, I saw a personage of some distinction, for Madame D'Arblay called. She expected to find, or professed to have expected to have found, her very dear friend, Madame de B.; of course she would have been ravished by her presence, she was desolated at her absence.

The favoured novelist had just returned from France, to which country few English went in those days, and from which still fewer returned. Her conversation, therefore, would have been very interesting if she had told us anything to the purpose; but she did not, and it was not so. She returned from an unsuccessful chase after her husband.

Whenever a Frenchman marries an Englishwoman, for some six years or so he makes her a most exemplary husband; and then, all at once, he plants her; plants her at once and for ever. Thus had the chevalier served the gifted authoress of *Evelina* and *Cecilia*. He, a singularly handsome man, as it was affirmed, for the accustomed period had been a good, almost too good a husband—too good, certainly, to last—and then suddenly he withdrew himself; withdrew himself, entirely against his inclination, but under the iron influence of some painful, irresistible and indescribable necessity, as his frequent and very affectionate letters abundantly testified, with often-repeated assurances, that he should never know a moment's peace of mind until his return at some remote and indefinite period.

The efforts of the most eloquent pen had failed to recall the

general, or even to obtain any specific limitation of the probable duration of the term of his absence and anguish.

The forsaken wife at last determined to go in quest of him herself, and to terminate his sufferings by bringing the fugitive back to happiness. With infinite difficulty and after long delays, and by moving heaven and earth, she had obtained a passport and permission to land in France. She gave us the details at great length. She procured, with some trouble, an open boat, and set out with her maidservant.

They reached the French coast, at what point I have forgotten; as they neared the land the soldiers on the beach made signs to the boat to retire; and as it still approached the shore, they fired their muskets, and the balls were heard whizzing over their heads. The boatmen resolved to return, madame was determined to remain; after some disputes the mistress and her maid were lifted out of the boat and set down, up to the middle in the water, with their portmanteaus on their heads. When the soldiers perceived that the formidable boat was retreating, they ceased to fire, but they took no notice of the poor women, who remained in the sea, the tide rising gradually until it reached their chins. Just in time however to save them from drowning, a boat came to them from the beach, and they were landed thoroughly wet, but unhurt.

Profound as the chevalier's affliction was, it had left no traces behind; every inquiry was vain, every research fruitless; no tidings could be heard of the disconsolate husband. It was inconceivable, but it was true, that he still persevered in withdrawing himself from his beloved wife, and from the young pledge of their affections: the general did not choose to redeem the pledge.

All the affecting and romantic incidents of the unavailing pursuit were related with a copious stream of conjugal eloquence in a discourse that threatened to be interminable. The effect of this celebrated lady's conversation, like her written narratives, was often to inspire astonishment, but certainly not always implicit belief. The feelings of the wife finally gave place to those of the daughter. We had never seen her father; we had never heard him play on the organ: we had lived therefore in vain.

It was arranged, that the reproach should be removed forthwith by meeting Evelina on a Sunday afternoon in the chapel at Chelsea Hospital. The appointment was duly kept; we attended the evening service, heard a heavy voluntary, and some other

performances, some of them being very loud, probably to display the power of the instrument; and we were afterwards presented to the author of the *History of Music*. It was adjudged and decreed that Bysshe should go with us; he would be delighted, some said. However, he took the liberty of judging for himself; he thought otherwise; and of acting for himself also; he was terrified at the bare proposal of listening to such heavenly strains and intellectual conversation; he eloiigned himself, and evaded pursuit as effectually as if he had been a goat, or even General D'Arblay himself. Something being said about the music of the ancients, the organist assured us that it had no merit whatever.

Some Greek tunes had been found in an old MS. of Pindar; these proved to be altogether intolerable; notwithstanding he had not only transposed the ancient notation into the modern form, but had also entirely rearranged them himself. The doctor's hearers were somewhat bigoted in their favourite opinion of the eminent perfection of Grecian art; on our way home we ventured to conjecture, that possibly the rearrangement had some share in making the antique melodies distasteful to modern ears. It was observed, that if the *Iliad* of Homer, having been long lost, had been lately found by the immortal doctor, and he had not only made the poem public, but had taken the trouble to rewrite it himself from beginning to end, it might be doubted whether the *Iliad* would have been admired as much in the improved recension, as it has been in the unformed state, in which the world has always possessed it. It was regretted by some of our party, needlessly, I thought, that Shelley had missed the opportunity of seeing the famous Madame D'Arblay and of being seen by her. And it was plotted to bring them together; but the plot, I believe, did not succeed; and it was quite as well that it did not. They were not suited for each other; whatever merit Miss Burney had, and no doubt she possessed much, was not to his taste. The daughter of a music-master, who got his bread by giving lessons at court and to the children of the aristocracy, who had been herself a sort of handmaid to the queen, an unworthy and unpleasant employment, according to her own account of the matter, could be neither more nor less than what she in fact was, a bundle of conventionalities; and these, however clever and well arranged, would not have proved attractive to the Divine Poet. Her conversation was not without ability, but it was wholly about herself, and the self not being at all interesting, the conversation could not be so.

'The New Zealander must have had a good appetite who wanted to eat you, Burney!' said Charles Lamb.

This remark was not much less applicable to the other members of that distinguished family whom I have seen, than it was to the gallant admiral to whom it was addressed; by whose misplaced confidence and misplaced obstinacy, as we read in the account of Cook's first voyage, sixteen men out of a boat's crew of thirty and upwards, commanded by Lieutenant Burney, were captured, roasted, and devoured.

Nurses say to their young charges: 'I could eat you up! I love you so much, I could eat you all up!'

I cannot think that the author of *Queen Mab* would have wished to eat the author of *Cecilia*, however nicely roasted and done brown.

It has been said by critics who reasoned from false analogies, and were not acquainted with Shelley, 'that it was in him to have walked towards the French Revolution over seas of blood'. For my part, and I knew him well, I am convinced that it was not. We cannot be quite sure, it is true, how any man would have acted in a particular case, unless he had been tried; but severe measures, persecution, and the shedding of blood, were contrary to his gentle nature. Besides, he was entirely without self-conceit; he had nothing of the hard, arrogant self-conceit of Citizen Brissot and his fellows; he was never a doctrinaire. His course was discussion, not doctrine, not dogmatism, not the stern dogmatism of an iron despotism.

The French revolutionists were eminently and conspicuously dogmatical; they could not bear contradiction. Shelley delighted in it. To contradict him flatly, and to dispute with him, endeared the disputant to him. He never proposed to form a code, he never would have accomplished, he never would have attempted it; he never would have got beyond the project of a code; interminable, endless discussion respecting a future code. He never would have set a going the guillotine, as has been inconsiderately affirmed, or kept it going; with him it was all doubt, disputation, discussion: his theories were unformed, incomplete, and especially unpractical. Socrates, as he is delineated by Plato, and whose boast it was that he knew nothing, was his prototype; we cannot conceive Socrates, under any circumstances, playing the part of Danton, or of Robespierre, and sending victims to the scaffold.

I often attempted myself, as others did, to make Shelley acquainted with such of my friends, as I thought might be

useful or agreeable to him; from whose society he might have derived amusement or instruction; but the attempt was hardly ever successful. I have sometimes endeavoured to gratify those, who were desirous, naturally and laudably desirous, to cultivate the acquaintance of so remarkable a person, by introducing him to them, by taking him to their houses, or by inviting them to meet him; but my efforts were almost always abortive; these schemes ended in vexation and disappointment. On these occasions only have I been very angry with him; that he should annoy myself alone by his irregularity I could readily pardon, I was accustomed to it; it was our ordinary course of business; but it was difficult to be equally patient when he compromised me with others.

People would get up a dinner party, or other entertainment, purely and solely on his account; others would remain in town for days, for a week or two, even; or would come from a distance to some point where he had promised to be found, for the sake of meeting him; and when they discovered that this trouble had been taken in vain, and so many inconveniences endured, without gaining the much-desired result, they were vexed and offended, especially the ladies, who ill-brook disappointment in any matter upon which their hearts are set. I was the more disconcerted in such cases, because I was conscious that I had most reason to be angry with myself, and with my own folly and credulity in trusting that which was by no means to be trusted. And to be angry and to expostulate on account of such failure and breach of promise, was to chide a waterfall; to inveigh against the wind, the sea, fire.

It is necessary in this life to pay a price exactly, fully equal to every advantage received by us; the advantage of the society of my incomparable friend was great, immense; but it is not to be denied that the price was heavy, and it was rigorously demanded, and punctually paid in full. He took strange caprices, unfounded frights and dislikes, vain apprehensions and panic terrors, and therefore he absented himself from formal and sacred engagements. He was unconscious and oblivious of times, places, persons, and seasons; and falling into some poetic vision, some daydream, he quickly and completely forgot all that he had repeatedly and solemnly promised; or he ran away after some object of imaginary urgency and importance, which suddenly came into his head, setting off in vain pursuit of it, he knew not whither. When he was caught, brought up in custody, and turned over to the ladies, with, Behold your King! to be caressed,

courted, admired, and flattered, the king of beauty and fancy would too commonly bolt; slip away, steal out, creep off; unobserved and almost magically he vanished; thus mysteriously depriving his fair subjects of his much coveted, long-looked-for company:

Making it momentary, as a sound;  
Swift, as a shadow; short, as any dream  
Brief, as the lightning.



## CHAPTER XXVI

At a late hour, when the assembly was breaking up, and some guests even had gone home, it has happened, although rarely, that he was again in the midst of us; the poor fellow, looking amazed and terrified, as if he had just come from Heaven and had there heard God's angels singing before the throne. His flight from society was usually surreptitious and stealthy, but I have observed him to start up hastily, to declare publicly that his presence was imperatively required elsewhere on matters of moment; and to retreat with as much noise and circumstance as an army breaking up its camp.

We used to meet in our circles some foreign society, especially many French emigrants. I had seen something of these exiles before, and so had Bysshe. His aunt, that is to say, the wife of his father's half-brother, John Shelley, showed much hospitality to the emigrant nobility, and filled the house at Penshurst with disagreeable and unprofitable guests. He spoke with distaste of his visits to Penshurst, except that he greatly admired the place itself and warmly lauded it. The emigrants, with very few exceptions, seemed to be just the people to be sent out of a country with advantage, but not by any means the people whom any sane man would recall or restore. Their chief characteristic was utter imbecility, rendered still more odious and imbecile by prodigious and exacting pretensions. Some of them doubtless were worthy men, but poor, feeble, helpless creatures; and many of their clergy were distinguished for a sincere and conspicuous piety, a merit above all human praise. These would go straight to Heaven with their martyred king, the child of St. Louis, and they would be quite at home there; it was precisely the place for them: but in this wicked world they were very much in the way.

Shelley seldom observed peculiarities of dress, but there was amongst these unfortunates an old fellow, he was a French duke, I believe, whose costume was so extraordinary that even he noticed it, and laughed heartily at the strange disguise. My lord, the duke, was strongly possessed by Anglomania, which he continued to indulge, although he was paying so dearly for it in

purse and in person, and for his countrymen's love of constitutional freedom. He was particularly ambitious to dress exactly like an Englishman, so that he might be taken for one, and after divers failures, he succeeded at last completely. This was his type; the purely English, or Anglomaniacal, habit was this. His coat was of cloth, of that kind of grey called pepper and salt, very light, indeed, much salt, with very little pepper. The waistcoat was of pepper and salt also, but darker, with more pepper. His shorts were of a like material, the pepper predominating and therefore being darker than the waistcoat; and his long gaiters were still darker, the darkest of all, being almost entirely pepper, with scarcely any salt.

We were ushered one morning into a room where this figure of fun was sitting alone. After sundry profound reverences and an exhortation not to despair, for our friends, he was assured and could assure us, would soon appear, he gravely asked me if he did not look exactly like an Englishman? If I could possibly suspect that he was a foreigner, a Frenchman? 'My lord, the duke, does us a very great honour in desiring so much to resemble us, and so closely!' My answer was accepted by the Anglomaniac as altogether satisfactory; but Bysshe broke forth into a shrieking peal of laughter, and rushed headlong out of the room.

'Is your friend taken ill, sir?'

'He is afflicted with a spasmodic cough.'

'Poor fellow! Poor young man!'

And the good-natured, unsuspecting peer seriously recommended that Eau de Luce should be frequently rubbed on his chest by a soft, warm hand.

'Eau de Luce is easily procured, but where will he find the soft, warm hand?'

'Oh! with his truly charming physiognomy, he will very easily find that!'

I repeated the gracious and graceful compliment to the culprit with the deserved warning:

'If you laugh at the poor old fellow's fashionable English suit again, you will be an ingrate, a thorough wretch! I will not shelter you any more. You shall repair his wounded honour; you shall meet him in Hyde Park, and empty your quarrel with the single rapier!'

The unexpected, vehement, and irrepressible bursts of laughter were often distressing, and, indeed, perilous.

I found Shelley one day in Chancery Lane, standing in the middle of the street in front of the gateway of Lincoln's Inn, and

staring about him, as if some genie had just set him down in the middle of an unknown city. I took his arm, and led him into the common dining-hall of Lincoln's Inn. The first and ancient Vice-Chancellor, Sir Thomas Plumer, was sitting on the bench, looking, as usual, exceedingly freckled, red-haired, hircose, and sordid. Half a dozen attorneys were seated with their backs to him in listless apathy, occasionally putting forth a leg by way of a change, and looking at the shoe, as if they had never seen one before, and yawning in immense oscitancy. Three or four dullards, the duller portion of a dull bar who practised in his court, were addressing his honour in turns, or squabbling altogether at once. Presently one of them said, with a certain deadly liveliness, as if he were uttering something new: 'I am very sure your honour will not open a door; for if your honour were once to open a door, the door being open, as your honour very well knows——' And thereupon, not without a certain resolute warmth, the court interposed: 'Sir, you are perfectly right; of one thing at least I am quite clear; I am determined I will never open a door!' This was too much: with a sharp shriek of fiendish laughter, Bysshe darted wildly out of the hall. To do him justice, Sir Thomas was a good-natured man: he looked compassionately towards the flying, mirth-stricken deer, and seemed to say to himself: 'Poor fellow! He has been taken ill; it is some fit! But I will never open a door for all that: I am quite determined'. And he continued to prose and to prate on in confirmation of his fixed determination. I stole out quietly in the midst of the old draughtsman's tautology and endless repetitions, spun-yarns of foxy, picked-oakum eloquence, and joined the fugitive. I found him musing before the door of the hall: he said to me very seriously: 'How strange it is, one wanders over half the world, comes back again, and always finds the same people in the same places saying the selfsame things; and saying a thousand times things not worth saying once!'

If all the world  
Should in a pet of temperance feed on pulse.

Shelley fed much on pulse at different periods, and for a long time together, but never in a pet; on the contrary, through a calm, deliberate choice, and a sincere conviction of the propriety and superior salubrity of such food. His letters inform us that he had occasionally restricted himself in great measure, if not entirely, to a vegetable diet. What first suggested to him the abstinence from flesh does not anywhere appear; whether his

own feelings and reflections, or the advice of others given orally, or in books. It was not until the spring of the year 1813 that he entered upon a full and exact course of vegetable diet. His Pythagorean, or Brahminical, existence, and his intimate association with the amiable and accomplished votaries of a Return to Nature, was perhaps the prettiest and most pleasing portion of his poetical, philosophical, and lovely life. His nutriment had ever been, and always was, simple; consisting, as has been already mentioned, principally of bread eaten by itself, or with some very slight and frugal condiment. Spirituous liquors he never tasted; beer, rarely. He never called for, purchased, or drew, wine for his own drinking; but if it came in his way, and the company was not disagreeable to him, he would sit at table awhile after dinner, and take two or three glasses of any white wine, uniformly selecting the weakest. I will not be hard upon him, and say that he absolutely disliked port wine—what Oxford man ever did?—but he had unpleasant associations with it. The sight of port wine reminded him of his father, who loved it dearly, and drank it freely; not to any reprehensible excess, but as a country gentleman and a justice of the peace ought to drink it.

I have often thought, and I have now and then even hinted, that if he could only bring himself to drink a bottle of choice port with his father, to sit sociably with him for an hour or two, and patiently to hear the old squire extol his wine and himself, they would get on much better together, and many serious difficulties and inconveniences would be avoided. But it was all in vain; my efforts as a peacemaker were thrown away. The alliance was impracticable—impossible. It may be very well to pour oil and wine into wounds, they may heal; but it is useless to stir the two liquors together, they will never mix.

Poor Bysshe was doomed to encounter many of those severe trials which wring the heart and wring it so hard. As the happiest period of his life was that spent at Oxford, so also was it the jolliest. He partook of the Oxonian potation, *negus*, with a real relish, and drank it freely, like a true and studious academic, as he was.

After reading for many hours, and walking for many hours, during the livelong day, indeed, the peripatetic student could not but enjoy his supper; and after supper—for the genius of the place would admit of no denial, or excuse—two tumblers of hot *negus*, each containing two full glasses of sherry, followed quietly and in order, as the silent planets pursue their nightly courses.

He did this then, did it freely, and thought no evil—in mental blindness. Afterwards, his eyes were opened. For I have reminded him of it; proposing, once in a way, a recurrence to old habits. But the child of light wondered how he could have been guilty of such a piece of odious and disgusting sensuality, sometimes adding: ‘I ought to have been shot for it!’

Sobriety was the exception, not the rule, at our very learned and most orthodox university. The college servants at Oxford were good, but muzzy, as the best servants often are, with an abiding and perennial muzziness, being constantly inspired with the soft inspiration of strong, sound ale, which flowed copiously from the buttery. When the ascetic young poet returned to Nature, alcohol in every shape—even in the subdued shape of negus—was strictly prohibited.

If his diet, fluid and solid, was cool, not less cool was his dress. I never remember to have seen Bysshe in a greatcoat or cloak, even in the coldest weather. He wore his waistcoat much or entirely open; sometimes there was an ellipsis of his waistcoat; it was not expressed, but understood. Unless he was compelled to cover it by main force, he had his throat bare; the neckcloth being cast aside, lost, over the hills and far away, and the collar of his shirt unbuttoned. In the street or road he reluctantly wore a hat, but in fields and gardens his little round head had no other covering than his long, wild, ragged locks.

The poor, imaginative, creative head was plunged several times a day into a basinful of cold water, which he invariably filled brimful, in order to throw as much water as possible on his feet and the floor. That the dripping locks might dry, he thrust, ever and anon, the fingers of both hands through them, and set them on end:

With hair upstaring then, like reeds, not hair.

However, the abstinence from wraps, from greatcoats and cloaks, was a characteristic of the age as well as of the individual. In the last of his notes on *Queen Mab*, as a commentary on the lines:

No longer now  
He slays the lamb, that looks him in the face,  
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,

the author has set forth his views on the subject of vegetable diet; it would be presumptuous, therefore, for another to discuss it; if it were not so indeed, most assuredly I am altogether inadequate to the task; and it is needless to reprint here what is in the hands of every reader. My impression is that the

matter contained in this long note was published originally in a separate, independent form. Whether I ever received a copy of the little work, if there was any such work, I do not remember; it is certain that I cannot lay my hand upon it at present. For some months, for some years, I was in the thick of it, for I lived much with a select and most estimable society of persons who had returned to nature, and of course I heard much discussion on the topic of vegetable diet. I never presumed to take a part myself in their arguments, for two reasons: first, because I heard quite enough of the matter, to say the least, without entering into the controversy; secondly, and principally, because I did not understand it and was not qualified to arrive at a sound conclusion. That some persons may be competent to determine the question, I do not deny; I will only affirm that I never was so fortunate as to fall in with even one of them. I did more than discuss, I conformed; not through faith, but for good fellowship, and because it was an agreeable experiment, if that can be called an experiment by which nothing is to be tried or discovered; perhaps I should rather say, that it was an agreeable change. Solomon says, and he says wisely: 'Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith'. My kind friends asserted, and they were wise in their generation—whether also in their choice of diet, I cannot decide—that a dinner of herbs, a vegetable dinner, is better than roast beef and love and friendship therewith. Certainly their vegetable dinners were delightful; elegant and excellent repasts; looking only to the table and the viands placed upon it, and not to those who sat round it

In solemn troops and sweet societies.

Flesh, fowl, fish, game, never appeared; nor eggs bodily in their individual capacity, nor butter in the gross: the two latter articles were admitted into cookery, it is true, but as sparingly as possible, and their presence was provisional, interlocutory, under protest, as culinary aids not approved of, and soon to be dispensed with. The injunction extended to shellfish. John Horne Tooke proposed shrimps and treacle to one of the fathers of the church vegetant here on earth; the treacle might have been accepted, but every individual shrimp would have been blackballed. We had soups in great variety, that seemed the more delicate from the absence of meat. There were vegetables of every kind, the finest and best of the kind, dressed with care and skill; either plainly or stewed, and otherwise artfully and scientifically arranged and disguised. Puddings, tarts, confections, sweets,

abounded. Cheese was under the ban—anathematized, excommunicate. Milk and cream might not be taken unreservedly; however, they were allowed to form ingredients in puddings, and to be poured sparingly into tea, as an indulgence to the weakness of neophytes, tender plants. Fruits of every description were welcomed—hailed rapturously, received with plaudits, as if the goddess Nature herself stood bodily before her votaries. We luxuriated, ran riot in tea and coffee, and sought variety occasionally in cocoa and chocolate. Bread and butter and buttered toast were eschewed; but bread-cakes, plain seed cakes, were liberally divided amongst the faithful.

An epicure, fond of variety, would do well to adopt vegetable diet now and then, for a day or two, as a change, for the mere gratification; as ‘a piece of odious and disgusting sensuality’. It ought not to be concealed, that to be agreeable, at least to a person of refined habits, vegetable fare must be good; consisting of the best materials after their kind, perfectly well prepared. Otherwise it degenerates into fasting and mortification. This species of self-denial, these ascetic restraints, may have their use in a spiritual aspect, and for the soul’s health, but that is altogether a different consideration, and not at all to the present purpose. The country is better suited to the practice of the bloodless regimen than a city. A well-stocked garden, furnishing fresh vegetables in profusion, an orchard yielding ripe fruit in unlimited abundance, for present consumption, and for the winter’s store, will feed luxuriously a hundred Pythagoreans. The climate of the south would be propitious, and its varied produce. Naples, as it struck me most forcibly, being present there, the fertile and fair island of Sicily doubtless—in a word, the lovely kingdom of the two Sicilies—would be the true Eden, the earthly Paradise, the very home for the penitent prodigal son, who had grace enough to return to his all-bountiful mother. On the shores of the Mediterranean flesh is not tempting, the fish is seldom inviting to a northern palate, but the pleasant regions are most rich in inanimate aliments. Macaroni and the other pastes of Italy were valuable helps. Onions, variously concocted and rendered as mild and innocuous as the dogmas of Pythagoras, were the staple seasoning; and mushrooms and their cryptogamous congeners were zests of inestimable value. The vegetable table is not economical, at least in London, even after making a liberal deduction for the absence of all fermented liquors, if it be spread in a comfortable and satisfactory style. In the country, probably, it is otherwise. In Italy, at Croton,

where Pythagoras lived and taught, it is certain that his discipline was not less exemplary and commendable for thrift, than for humanity and temperance.

In all opinions, in every sect, there is uniformly an extreme party, and so was it with the votaries of vegetable diet. Some held that the effect of fire on aliment was to render it insalubrious. Man should live, they told us, on raw vegetable substances: on salads, apples, peas, beans, and cauliflowers, uncooked; on raw meal, raw carrots, turnips, and potatoes. They rejected the discovery, or the theft, of Prometheus, banishing fire from their kitchens. Every church has its miracles: I was credibly informed that the patriarch, who was very far in advance of his age, once actually ate a raw potato. I never heard that he ate a second; and the rationalists indeed affirm that he only talked of eating the first. There are, moreover, contrarieties and contradictions in all schools of philosophers, and not the fewest, or the least startling, are apparent amongst the champions of the extreme party. According to the advocates of absolute, universal crudity, nothing was to be cooked, except that which does not require cookery—water. Water was to be distilled, to be subjected to the violent action of otherwise forbidden fire, which rendered it disagreeable, odious. Water thus prepared had a disgusting taste; it was gravely pronounced to be only an empyreuma, but it was not more palatable after this hard name had emanated from authority. The Magi, the water kings, found, or fancied they had found, after a clumsy and tedious analysis, a small bit of lead in the water, which was derived, they said, from the leaden pipes, in which water, to our utter destruction was conveyed. I saw the trophy, for it was exhibited in triumph. To eyes only partially unsophisticated, it looked like a single pellet of dust-shot: if it had been sent forth as a missile, it might have proved formidable to a fly, but would not have knocked a wren off her perch; yet was it to kill and murder half London. Nay, more: the presence of arsenic had been detected in the most limpid spring water; half a grain of the metal in several tons of water. Arsenic, we are taught, may be found, although in infinitely small quantities, in almost all substances. In minute, infinitesimal doses, it is not poisonous, not injurious, we are assured, but salutary. One Sunday morning we actually assisted at an arsenic hunt: we dropped in upon the patriarch, who, ever zealous in the good cause, had extemporized a laboratory in his parlour. He was certainly by no means bloodthirsty, but a mild and most merciful man—the



best of men; nevertheless, he had made himself look like a tiger; he had given himself the aspect of a royal Bengal tiger. He was dressed in a suit of black, of rusty black: coat, waistcoat, shorts, and gaiters, were all of cloth, which, in the good old times, had been black. He was busy with his alembics, in hot pursuit of arsenic, luting his retorts with pipeclay; and he had been wiping the clay off his fingers, from time to time, all the morning, not with a towel, but by drawing his hands across his clothes; so that when we entered the study of the alchemist, he was barred and brindled all over with white stripes, on a dark ground. He had completely satisfied himself, he said, of the insalubrity and deleteriousness of water undistilled, and he undertook to convince us of the correctness of his conclusions, but chiefly, I must say, by nods and winks, and mysterious signs. So awkward and credulous a chemist, by experiments so clumsily conducted, and with so imperfect an apparatus, ought surely to be able to find anything in anything.

I heard of small parties vegetating in the country, dotted about here and there, who had adopted the vegetable diet, and were steadily pursuing it; and I even met with some specimens of them. They were good, simple people enough, I dare say, but of no talents, note, or mark; for the most part Dissenters, I believe, and far gone in dissent, and consequently ready and ripe for any crotchets.

Joe Ritson was before my time, I think; certainly I never fell in with him. He had some business as a conveyancer, some reputation as an antiquary; but as a feeder on vegetable substances, he put forward his theories with such vehemence and wild extravagance, as to be stigmatized, perhaps unjustly, as a wretched maniac. He called sheep, oxen, and pigs 'our fellow creatures', as undeniably they are in a certain sense; and he inferred from that appellation that we ought not to eat their flesh, or put them to death. A flea, a bug, a louse, or a tapeworm is also a fellow creature; and what then? So likewise is a cabbage: Horace speaks of slaying a leek and an onion.

So long as I observed the vegetable rule myself, I observed it very exactly, according to the canons which I had received from the doctors of the gentle, tolerant, bloodless church, because my mind was naturally disposed for precision and strictness. But Shelley was a creature of impulses; so long as he was in company with the authorities, his practice was unexceptionable; but not so, it is to be feared, when he was left to himself to pursue unimpeded his own erratic course. He could follow no other laws

than the golden law of doing instantly whatever the inclination of the moment prompted. I have heard that during the period when he was pointed out as an exemplary Pythagorean, he was one day found in the lake district, where he had been wandering alone on foot, in a very small room at a very small inn, with a very small circular table before him, and upon this was an enormous round of cold boiled beef, from which the famished philosopher was helping himself freely, as if it had been a brown loaf, or a piece of canonical seed cake. At this deflection from the path of rectitude, nobody who knew him could be surprised; but I confess I was somewhat astonished at the aberration of another high authority, a defender of the faith, which I myself witnessed. After a long walk one Sunday in the summer, we called upon our friend to take tea with him, which we had promised to do, for his family was absent, and he was left quite alone: it would be an act of charity. When we arrived he was still at table; by some casualty the hour of dinner had been postponed. We were shown into the dining-room; he was not a little disconcerted, and not without reason. There was a sufficient supply of vegetables on the board, no doubt, but there was also a fine roast fillet of veal, and upon this he was experimentalizing with a carving-knife and fork. For some moments he sat mute; when he had recovered a little, he said:

'My servants are carnivorous, they are cannibals; this meat is for them; but I had it brought up just to look at it, to see how they are treated, poor things!'

'But you have been eating it!' Bysshe exclaimed, with as much horror as if it had been the body of Pelops.

'Why, as it was here, I thought there could be no great harm whatever in just tasting the stuffing. Veal stuffing, you know, is merely bread and herbs and spices, and other little matters chopped up together.'

He had tasted the stuffing, evidently, and in cutting it his knife must have slipped, or he had not nicely discriminated between the stuffing and the meat.

There was another remarkable instance of transgression; it was at headquarters. I did not see it, but I heard of it; we all heard of it, and it made the ears of the elect tingle. The wife of the patriarch, the primate of all vegetables, was brought to bed, most auspiciously, of course; disease and death had no more dominion over her. The prescribed regimen during her confinement was cold pease-pudding with a slice of dry bread; and with this simple fare she was going on prosperously, charmingly.

Mrs. A. called to see her friend, as soon as one lady may call upon another in such a case, and was gratified with the pleasing aspect of such a rapid recovery. It was most important to mothers; a rule had been obtained to show cause why the curse of Eve should not be set aside. It was time to dine, under the salubrious system of antiphlogistic diet punctuality was essential. With a surgeon's wife there is no need of apologies, and all ceremony in a sick-room is quite out of place. Dinner was served. The lady in the straw ate a mouthful or two of the cold pease-pudding, and crumbled the bread to the wonder and edification of her visitor. The latter took her leave, and on her way downstairs she met something not less wonderful, but far less edifying, a plump roast fowl went smoking on, as it was being carried incautiously from the cold vegetable kitchen to the lady's bedroom. What news for Bedford Row! What a treat for Bedford Row! The blunt surgeon was no friend to vegetable diet; it was affirmed that he was even exceedingly hostile to its assertors and defenders. Consequently, as soon as the emperor and autocrat of all the blue pills heard of the mission of the roast fowl, and he heard of it very soon, the carnivorous malignant spread the glad tidings far and wide. Medical people swarmed about the meek followers of vegetable diet, like wasps about a pot of honey; whether as spies to see the nakedness of the land, or to observe more nearly the regimen, that was to cure and to prevent all diseases.

To such as had adopted this mode of living with sanatory views, supposing it would benefit their health, that is to say to the greater number of the modern Pythagoreans, and were so credulous as to believe that the professors of the art of healing knew more of the matter than those who know nothing whatever, they were welcome: they encouraged their advances, and cultivated their acquaintance. Consequently, I saw something at that period of medical society; I cannot say that, upon the whole, it was agreeable. Some of the therapeutics were tolerably good company, but not one of them, as far as I remember, was particularly pleasant. For the most part they were mere prigs, living glossaries of hard words, conceited, intolerant, and dogmatical, to a ludicrous excess, on points which, at best, were extremely doubtful. They were given up helplessly and hopelessly to the last new whim of the day; ascribed and bound as serfs to some recent, new-fangled crotchet: half-taught or quarter-taught — sometimes considerably less than quarter-taught. Jealous, envious, illiberal, and quarrelsome; detracting

from and backbiting each other; and too frequently epicureans, obtruding and thrusting in men's faces a low, offensive, and shallow materialism. When these people are content steadily to follow the established praxis, they can cure some diseases and mitigate others; but if they begin to generalize, to write, or discourse, of the healthful in the abstract, they are sadly to seek. On that head all mankind are equally ignorant; unprofessional persons do not venture far, and therefore they do not expose themselves much; but adepts, as they esteem themselves, are bolder; they go far out to sea, out of sight of land, and are wrecked and drowned in the unfathomable ocean of error.

Sir Joseph Banks, discoursing about the propriety and expediency of excluding medical applicants, as far as it was practicable, from the Royal Society, said: 'Their love of science is commonly all stuff and sham. The privilege of placing three letters of the alphabet after the name is considered of importance, and is only sought as a puff and advertisement. It is but newly gilding the pestle and mortar over the door of the shop, in order to attract customers'. This rule, as it was laid down by the president—a golden rule, it should seem—has been pretty steadily adhered to, I have heard; whereat these very crusty folks are often in high dudgeon, and sometimes explode in a very diverting manner.

In law, physic, and divinity, it is universally acknowledged that extensive, sweeping, and fundamental changes are equally required, and can no longer be refused; but of no profession will the members ever reform themselves; amendments must always come from without:

By foreign hands those dying eyes were closed,  
By foreign hands those decent limbs composed.

If any eyes are to be closed, any shops of injustice and iniquity to be shut up; if any limbs, decent or indecent, are to be set in order, it is plain that it can only be effected by foreign hands:

By strangers honoured, and by strangers mourned.

They must be utter strangers, foreigners from a far, distant, and very strange land indeed, who honour certain subsisting abuses, and who would mourn them when they had been completely and finally removed. Whilst I pursued the pure and most merciful diet, I was often asked: 'How can you be so cruel to yourself?' There was no cruelty in the case. When I had abandoned it the question was: 'Why did you ever relinquish what you found to be so agreeable? Why did you ever give it up?' I answered,

half in jest, half in earnest: 'Because I found that I was growing too good for this wicked world; getting too moral, too wise, too pure, too virtuous to live in a faithless and perverse generation'. My answer was always received with laughter, and indeed it was laughable and ridiculous enough; and yet there was some truth in it, as there often is in sayings that provoke laughter. Why does a man ever give anything up? Why does he ever take to anything new? These are questions more easily asked than answered. The intellect and the senses, physical and moral, are lighter, as it were, under the influence of a light diet. A complete renunciation of all fermented, stimulating, intoxicating liquors was coupled with the abstinence from flesh. The nonsense usually talked after dinner was too insupportably nonsensical, unless the faculties of the hearer were dimmed as well as those of the speaker. The ordinary commonplace of life seemed too commonplace to be borne by an understanding that is always clear and cloudless. Sympathy is indispensable to a sentient being, and, in order to sympathize with dull fellows, a certain amount of dulness is demanded. Possibly the mind needs repose as well as the body: to rest, to sleep, not only during the night, but in the working hours of the day; and the soporifics of a heavy diet, and composing, sedative, stupefying drinks have their office and use.

## CHAPTER XXVII

THE sale of Horne Tooke's library caused a lively interest, because it had been his habit to write notes in his books. From the specimens which I met with, these annotations would seem to be of no great value. Always trifling, often scurrilous and abusive, they did not reflect much credit on the annotator. Nevertheless, public curiosity was strong, and people bid with spirit against one another, to obtain possession of the annotated volumes. Mr. N. had presented his friend with an early copy of *The Return to Nature*; and he was most anxious to procure the important work, enriched with the important notes of a distinguished scholar, philologist, and philosopher. Accordingly, he commissioned a friend, who was to attend the sale, to purchase it for him, and to go as far as fifty guineas. The anxious author lay awake the whole of the night before the day when his work was to be put up, thinking of the severe competition that would so soon ensue; and as soon as it was light he dispatched a note, authorizing his friend, should it be necessary, as most probably it would, to offer one hundred guineas. In the course of the morning it occurred to him that it would be a pity to lose an inestimable treasure through ill-timed parsimony: he hastened to the house of his mandatary, to request him to extend the bidding to two hundred guineas. He could not expect to obtain it for less; and, in truth, it would be dirt cheap at that price. To his dismay, he came too late; his friend was already gone; the opportunity was lost, lost for ever! He returned home in great agitation, but gradually comforted himself by believing that the Government would most assuredly purchase it for an enormous sum, and then he might hope to get a sight of it. Surely his college friend, Canning, would procure for him that gratification.

In the midst of his hopes and fears, his friend entered the room with a thin octavo volume in his hand.

'Well, N., I have got your book for you! Here it is!'

'Did you really get it for one hundred guineas?'

'No! no!'

'I am glad you did not let it pass you. Two hundred guineas,

I suppose. I shall never forget your kindness! Stop, I will write you a cheque for the money!’

‘You need not do that. It is a six shilling book, you know; it was put up at one shilling. Nobody bid for it; so I offered eighteenpence, and it was knocked down to me instantly. Here it is, as good as new! It has never been cut open.’

The self-satisfaction of an author may be checked for a moment, but happily it cannot be killed; if it be nipped awhile in the bud, speedily, by the wise dispensation of a merciful Providence, it doth revive again. His mercy, fortunately for us, is over all his works, and more particularly over all the works of all his writing creatures—good, bad, and indifferent. In a short time, therefore, after this cheap purchase, we heard:

‘My poor friend, John Horne Tooke, was the wisest and best of men in thought, word, and deed; a true philosopher, always consistent, always like himself! Look here,’ and the uncut, unopened volume was adduced in proof. ‘He would not read such a work as this in a cursory way. He could never bring himself to skim it over; he felt its importance, and the importance of the subject; he intended to take it in hand, to go regularly through it, to weigh every argument, to illustrate it with an ample commentary; and, until he could find leisure, it would have taken him a long time, a very long time, to have done it justice; so, until then, he would not even cut it open. There it is! Look at it! It was just like him! It was his way! Poor fellow!’

To draw an illustration in a like matter from a similar neglect of an author—one not breathing the elegance of Eton, or of the classical Christ Church, but of a rough, wild disciple of some Scottish university—I will add one more instance:

I once took up a book in the reading-room of the British Museum: it was the only copy I ever saw. I never read the work myself, but I have been told that it is rather a sensible production, and treats fairly enough of the West India Islands, proves the benefits of slavery, and shows, faithfully and fairly, that the Blacks were then, and not without reason, contented and happy. It was a presentation copy from a F.R.S. to the venerable president—to Sir Joseph Banks—whose library was acquired after his death by the British Museum. There was a complimentary flourish on a blank leaf at the beginning, in the handwriting of the author. Nevertheless, this volume also was unopened, and probably for the self-same reason. That great and good man, and distinguished naturalist—and such Sir Joseph undoubtedly was in his special department—had not

cut open a page, or read a single line, and never intended to do so until he should happen to find himself in a position to treat the volume as it deserved to be treated: if not carefully to weigh and perpend the writer's statements, and to light them up by a lucid and ample commentary.

Did you ever see John Horne Tooke? Who ever saw him? I says the fly, with my little eye, I saw John Horne Tooke. With my own eyes, little or great, I saw him once. He was a fine, venerable old man—a gentleman polite with the politeness of the old school. I was walking with a friend one day on Wimbledon Common, near his house, and we fell in with him. He greeted my friend cordially, shaking hands with him heartily. 'I have not seen you for a long time; you never come near me now! Come and dine with me some Sunday—any Sunday. And bring your young friend with you; I shall be glad to see him.' And he bowed to me in the antique style, taking his hat quite off his head, like a fine old English gentleman, one of the old school. 'You know where to find me, and at what hour I dine. But, let me see, I shall hardly know how to entertain you! You have returned to Nature, little N——, have you not? You have withdrawn into the wilderness, like your precursor; and you live, like him, upon locusts and wild honey, do you not? I have no locusts and wild honey for you, but I will come as near as I can. You shall have shrimps and treacle, little N——, and plenty of them, I promise you, and these will do nearly as well. So mind you come soon.'

With regret I add that the visit was never paid. It was proposed, moreover, to introduce Bysshe to him. He will be delighted with Shelley, and Shelley will be delighted with him. This was very probable, but unfortunately the author of the *Diversions of Purley* died before the meeting was brought about.

'Did you notice that he called me "Little N——"? He always called me so; it was a term of endearment with him. He always addressed William Godwin as "Little Godwin".' The epithet 'Little' was more applicable to William Godwin than to my friend. 'Did you know John Horne Tooke? Did you ever see him?' I once asked a lady of unusual attainments, who had been acquainted with many of the men of talent and celebrity of her day. 'I did not know him. I only saw him once; and that was casually, and by a mere accident. Mr. Fenwick took me one morning into the House of Lords, to see the place, which I had never entered before. There was a gentleman standing by the bar, engaged in earnest conversation—disputing, I may



say—with a bishop. “Do you see that person talking with the bishop? It is the celebrated John Horne Tooke.” I immediately drew near him, to catch, if possible, what he said. I heard but little; however, that little was characteristic. “It is a gerund, sir!” said the bishop. “A gerund! Impossible! There is no such thing as a gerund, my lord. There are no gerunds in any language, I assure you. There is no such thing as a gerund!”

The following anecdote was generally current soon after the death of the illustrious etymologist. It was believed by many; what truth there is in it I know not. John Horne Tooke had published, long ago, the first part of the *Diversions of Purley*. It was read with wonder and delight. A second part appeared after a considerable interval; it was upon the same plan as the former portion, but it was certainly far less amusing. It was understood that he was occupied for several years in the composition of the third, the last and the most important part; in which he was to unfold the nature of the chief word in every sentence; of the word, the verb. It was long before he could content himself with his own peculiar mode of handling this difficult division of grammar; but at last the third volume also was finished. He delivered the precious manuscript in a sealed packet to his friend and pupil, Sir Francis Burdett, an interlocutor in the Purley dialogues, under the initial B., with a strict injunction to publish the book immediately after the decease of the author, but on no account sooner; the discoveries in grammatical science being far too weighty to be communicated to the world during the life of the inventor. A short time—a very few days only, some said, before his death, he desired B. to bring the sealed packet. It was brought to him accordingly. He took it out of his pupil's hands, threw it instantly upon the fire, standing over it until it was entirely consumed, without uttering a word. The matter was frequently and sometimes vehemently discussed. The disappointed curiosity of the learned censured B. sharply, and probably unjustly. He did not know for what purpose the deposit was demanded. If he had known—if the command had been: ‘Bring the manuscript, that I may destroy it’—he might have expostulated, but could he have withheld it? Consequently, through one man's obedience, we are ignorant what the verb really is; probably we shall never know. We only know with certainty that there is no such thing as a gerund. With this scrap of knowledge we must even be contented; the rest is a sealed book to us, and worse, it is a book sealed up and burned.

I have been informed by persons acquainted with the habits of study of John Horne Tooke, that he used to carry in his pocket a card-case containing cards of the size of visiting-cards, but blank: whenever a thought struck him, when an important reference was made, a valuable authority cited, or some inquiry suggested itself to his mind, or was suggested by others, he wrote a brief memorandum with his pencil on a card, and replaced it in its case. The inscribed cards he slipped through a slit into his desk—'put it into the post office' was his phrase—that the matter might be taken up afterwards, and pursued by him at leisure. This ingenious device in aid of memory caught Shelley's fancy, but I am not aware that he ever adopted it; his cards, I fear, would have gone astray, like the prophetic leaves of the Cumæan Sibyl.

Another anecdote of the mode of taking notes by another illustrious personage pleased him still more; on this account, if not for the sake of its intrinsic worth, it is worthy to be repeated and remembered. For in hero-worship, nothing that relates to the object of adoration is trifling to the adorers. Blaise Pascal, to whom Shelley, however different in some respects, bore in others a striking resemblance, was fond of radishes; and he loved to draw them himself fresh from the ground in his sister's garden, as we are gravely assured by an admiring Jansenist: let it be known, then, to posterity that Shelley delighted in honey, and more especially in honeycomb. And so is it in demon-worship, demonology, or demonography; a recent biographer informs us that Robespierre was a voracious devourer of oranges. At the carpenter's house, where he boarded, there was always a large dish of oranges for him after dinner, and the empty skins piled upon Maximilian's plate attested, that the miscreant was not less thirsty of orange-juice than of human blood. But to return to the anecdote. Our kind friend, J. F. N., informed us that some old gentleman of his acquaintance, whose name I have forgotten, came over from France in the packet with Rousseau and David Hume. The Scotch philosopher was sick, and kept below, but the citizen of Geneva was quite well and lively, and remained on deck. He was sociable, talkative, and inquisitive, and asked many questions. Observing this gentleman writing upon a substance that was new to him, he begged to know what it might be. It was ass's-skin, a substance much used formerly in pocket-books, but now seldom to be seen. The nature of the tablet was explained to him; how well it received and retained the marks of a black-

lead pencil, and how readily the characters were effaced when it was wetted. Rousseau was much surprised at the novelty; upon which the gentleman presented him with the pocket-book, and it was accepted with great and almost childish eagerness. During the remainder of the voyage, with the infantine simplicity of genius, the most eloquent of philosophers was constantly playing with his new toy; busily writing upon the ass's-skin, wiping out, and writing again. Nevertheless, it is by no means impossible that the fanciful, capricious, suspicious man soon afterwards might take offence at the gift, imagine that some treachery lurked in it; that there was a snake in the grass, that the smooth tablet was contrived purposely to betray and ruin him, poisoned by the deceitful David, and thereupon it might be committed to the flames. A subtle poison infused by the envenomed malice of the jealous, insidious Hume into the ass's-skin, gradually ascending up the pencil into the fingers, and proceeding thence along the arm, and finally arriving at the heart, and thereupon instantaneous death, or perhaps a more picturesque wasting, languishing, perishing by slow but inevitable decay: the bare idea of such an incident was charming to Shelley, and every tablet of ass's-skin was a page of romance.

To mention a third remarkable man, and one of the same leaven with the two former, if not of the leaven of the Pharisees—Thomas Paine, whose style his admirers affirm is so correct, so pure, so plain, so distinct, so English, that he never made any alterations in his writing. There was not a single correction, never one erasure in his MS. His manner of composing, as I have heard persons who had known him relate, was this. He walked backwards and forwards about the room until he had completed a sentence to his satisfaction; he then wrote it down entire and perfect, and never to be amended. When the weather was fair, if there was a garden, a field, a courtyard, at hand, he walked about out of doors for a while, and then came in and put down the sentence which he had arranged mentally, and went out again and walked until he was ready to be delivered of another.

Whenever he came in from a walk, from the streets or the road, he for the most part went immediately to his desk, and set down a finished sentence or two; sometimes a whole paragraph, a just paragraph, that needed no repentance. It appears to me, I confess, that there is nothing wonderful, or admirable, in this. It matters little whether corrections are made in the head or upon paper. A blotted and blurred page is offensive to a man of precise and neat habits; and the author of the *Rights of Man*

was very likely such, having been bred a Quaker. Besides, a person believing in immediate inspiration, cannot well tolerate emendations; for whatever has been inspired directly from above cannot need correction, or indeed admit of it. It was probably through the force of early habit that Friend Paine continued to the last to pen his conceptions in faultless, immaculate, unamended writing.

It was in the year 1813 that I first became acquainted with William Godwin. I saw him frequently in the course of that year, and in the year following; and afterwards I met him more or less frequently, according to circumstances. I had expressed a wish to know him, and I was soon invited by a charming family, with whom he was intimate, to dine at their house, where I should find him and Bysshe. I repaired thither, to a somewhat early dinner, in accordance with the habits of the philosopher. I was not on any account to be late, for it was unpleasant to him to dine later than four o'clock.

It was a fine Sunday. I set out betimes, and arrived at the appointed place at half-past three. I found a short, stout, thick-set old man, of very fair complexion, and with a bald and very large head, in the drawing-room, alone, where he had been for some time by himself, and he appeared to be rather uneasy at being alone. He made himself known to me as William Godwin; it was thus he styled himself. His dress was dark, and very plain, of an old-fashioned cut, even for an old man. His appearance, indeed, was altogether that of a dissenting minister. He informed me that our hospitable host and his family had been called away suddenly into the country, and that we should not have their company, but that Mr. Shelley was expected every moment. He consulted several times a large old silver watch, and wondered greatly that he had not come; but he would doubtless be with us immediately. He spoke confidently on a subject, which, to say the least, was doubtful. Bysshe, as was not uncommonly the case with him, never came near us. Why he made default, nobody ever knew, least of all did he know himself.

'Had Mr. Shelley mistaken the day, the hour? Did he not know the place; surely he must know it, and know it well?'

I could only say, on behalf of my absent friend, that he often failed to observe his engagements and appointments. It was his habit; a disagreeable and most inconvenient one, certainly. Why and how he had formed it, I could not tell, although I was much interrogated and cross-examined on that head. It had

been the way with him ever since I had known him, and it was only too probable that it always would be so. I could not explain, excuse, defend, or justify it; I could merely affirm that so it was.

At four o'clock, I rang the bell, and ordered dinner. To this order there were objections and expostulations.

'We ought, in common civility, to wait awhile. Mr. Shelley could not fail to be with us shortly.'

The objections were overruled, and we two went to dinner; and we two were a multitude, to judge from the number of dishes on the table. Vegetable fare was the rule of the house, and I observed the rule myself; but meat of various kinds had been prepared in various ways for the cannibal guest. He dined carnivorously, but very moderately, paying little attention to the plates of vegetables, which he seemed to contemn, as well as the lore by which they were zealously and learnedly recommended.

William Godwin, according to my observation, always ate meat, and rather sparingly, and little else besides. He drank a glass or two of sherry, wherein I did not join him. Soon after dinner a large cup of very strong green tea—of gunpowder tea, intensely strong—was brought to him; this he took with evident satisfaction, and it was the only thing that he appeared to enjoy, although our fare was excellent. Having drunk the tea he set the cup and saucer forcibly upon the table, at a great distance from him, according to the usages of that old school of manners, to which he so plainly belonged. He presently fell into a sound sleep, sitting very forward in his chair, and leaning forward, so that at times he threatened to fall forward; but no harm came to him. Not only did the old philosopher sleep soundly, deeply, but he snored loudly.

I got a book, and retiring to the window sat reading for half an hour, or longer, until he awoke. He awoke suddenly, and appeared to be refreshed. 'Had Mr. Shelley arrived?' It was his first thought on waking. He would not take any more wine; he would not walk. It was a lovely evening, but he should have quite enough of walking in coming and in returning. He would go to the drawing-room, and we went upstairs.

Sir William Gell's description of the island of Ithaca had just come out; a handsome quarto volume with engravings; and it lay upon the table. We looked over it together; it was new to both of us, and it interested us greatly. He discoursed much of Ithaca, of Greece, of Ulysses, of Troy, of Homer, and of

Chapman's Homer: it was manifest that his acquaintance with the poems of Homer was chiefly, if not entirely, derived from Chapman's translation. However, he was quite familiar with the story, the characters, the manners of the *Odyssey*. We spoke nearly all the time we were together of the many extraordinary things, of many things hard to be understood, which are found in that ancient and wonderful poem. The tea things were brought in. I made tea; I forget whether my companion partook of it. Tea was always most acceptable to me, particularly whilst I was a Pythagorean. Poor dear Pythagoras, with all his wisdom he did not know how to make himself a good cup of tea; or where he might purchase a pound of passable Pekoe, or of satisfactory Souchong. During the whole course of our conversation and operations, my respected associate ever and anon recurred, uneasily and impatiently, to a matter which distressed him sorely—the absence of Mr. Shelley.

Mr. Shelley and William Godwin—such was to be the form of speech: he persisted as pertinaciously in dubbing Bysshe Mister, as in rejecting the title for himself. He questioned me again and again on the subject, and I thought with a certain air of lurking suspicion, as if I knew more than I chose to tell; as if I were privy to the plot, and that there was some deep design in his non-attendance. If he really believed that I was in the confidence of the motives and the secret of his absence, he did me a great injustice.

I ventured to say a few words concerning his famous work on Political Justice; but the topic did not appear to be an agreeable one. The author spoke of it slightly and disparagingly, either through modesty and politeness, or because he really had come to consider his theories and speculations on government and morals, crude, unformed, and untenable. Whenever that publication has been mentioned to him in my hearing, he uniformly treated the child of his brain like a stepfather. Possibly he felt that his offspring had turned out ill, and had not requited the patience and anxiety that a fond parent had bestowed upon an ingrate. At last he was reluctantly convinced that we should not see the truant. 'Perhaps he was unwell? Did I believe that Mr. Shelley had been taken ill?' On the contrary, I firmly believed that he was as well, and as unpunctual, as he had ever been in his life.

William Godwin took leave of me somewhat early, at ten o'clock precisely by the old watch, charging me earnestly and repeatedly to say a great many things to Mr. Shelley, whom

most probably I should see first, by way of reprehension, admonition, and well-merited censure for his unwarrantable neglect. I promised to inform the offender of his disappointment and dissatisfaction. I did not know in what direction the grave reprob's homeward course lay, or whether he might desire any more of my society, and therefore I did not offer to accompany him, as I frequently did at our subsequent meetings. The next morning I saw Bysshe. He was delighted to learn that I had met with William Godwin.

'What did he say? What did we do? What did I think of him? How did I like him?'

He devoured me with greedy questions, and listened to my answers with eager curiosity and enthusiastic pleasure. But when, to keep my promise with the sage, I reported the proceedings of the preceding day, and inquired, in my turn, why he had been nonsuited at our sittings, and had lost his writ of *nisi prius*, the rocks are never more deaf to naked, shipwrecked mariners than his locked-up ears were to the interrogatories and reproaches which I faithfully conveyed to him.

In the same comfortable house, which looked upon a plain, at that time green and open with spacious fields, but now fashionable with Belgravia, I soon met William Godwin again. I entered the drawing-room one evening, and found him seated on the sofa; not alone, as before, but in a circle. He was stoutly maintaining, against several ladies, that hair and moss are the same substance, both growing in the same situation, and in precisely the same manner. His arguments were not successful; his paradox was not prosperous; he entirely failed to convince. I apprehend that the discussion arose out of the consideration of vegetable diet, and that he was endeavouring to show, that there is no essential difference between animal and vegetable substances. In society he was usually reserved, shy, and silent; yet did he always inspire a certain interest. Whatever he said, when he chose to be communicative, was listened to with attention, and was always worth hearing. He appeared to myself and to others to be a perpetual contradiction. He was at once pleasant and unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable. His conversation was yielded so sparingly that it could never offend by excess, or seem intrusive; his speech was abrupt and curt, but every remark had its value, and was peculiar and characteristic. His works, the best of them at least, as *Caleb Williams* and *St. Leon*, are read with pleasure and with pain. The mind of the reader is strongly arrested and highly gratified;

and yet he rises from the powerful volumes not without a certain uncomfortable feeling; and the like impressions were produced by personal intercourse with the highly-gifted author. His articulation was indistinct; his utterance was not easy, but impeded by a sort of effort or catch, sharp and dry. It seemed to be painful to the speaker as well as to the hearer. This it certainly was to a stranger; but one got accustomed to it by degrees, and then one found in it peculiarity, individuality, and character; and these qualities would be wanting, if the quality of his voice were less grating and inharmonious.

He was cherished by the kind and amiable family through whose favour I first knew him, and treated with politeness and deference, and his company was courted. Having been put up to it probably at home, he seemed to labour to introduce his family also to their notice; but in this attempt he was not encouraged.

At our second meeting he was in no hurry to depart; it was long after the old watch had pointed to ten that he rose to take his leave. The lady of the house informed him that I was going in the same direction, and that I would attend him. As soon as we found ourselves in the street, he put his arm through mine, and we trudged homewards together. He proceeded to the City, to Skinner Street; I wished him a good-night, or a good-morning, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I have frequently walked the same distance with him—a considerable distance, especially by the side of a short-legged old man, who got over the ground slowly.

Head to head, as the French have it, he was by no means silent, as he was in mixed societies. He was communicative, conversible; he chatted as he walked with short, tardy steps, but without interruption or intermission. When I reached my lodgings I went instantly to bed to sleep; for however late the hour of taking rest might be, I never failed to rise punctually at seven. I should have acted a wiser part—I should have discharged the functions of a Boswell better—if I had sat up for half an hour, and had committed to paper notes of what I had just heard. But I went to sleep—to forgetfulness; and therefore my recollections of the Diversions, not of Purley, but of Piccadilly and Long Acre, are now but meagre and scanty.

'What is your principal line of reading?'

'Law.'

This course of study was not approved of. The Caliph, Ebubekr, said, 'that women are an evil, and that they are a still greater evil because they are a necessary evil'. So my legal



studies were disapproved of all the more because they were inevitable.

‘What else do you read besides Law?’

‘Greek and Latin, French and Italian, the classics and modern languages.’

‘Do you never read English books?’

‘Yes, sometimes.’

‘Of what kind?’

‘Voyages and travels, history, and biography.’

‘All of them modern?’

‘Almost entirely new publications.’

‘Have you read none of our old English writers?’

‘Very few. Shakespeare; little besides.’

I was strongly and seriously advised to take the old English authors in hand. Several of them were indicated and recommended. The father of English literature, of English poetry, was especially introduced to my notice, and urged upon me.

‘But I should not understand his language; his English must be so antiquated, that I could not comprehend it.’

‘By no means; you will find no difficulty. There are a few antique, obsolete words in his poems, no doubt, but very few; far fewer than you would suppose; and there are glossaries to explain these; you will find no difficulty whatever.’

The illustrious poet, whose life and times William Godwin set forth in detail, and in a ponderous quarto, was so constantly and perseveringly pressed upon me, that I promised, as soon as I had leisure, to begin to read his poems; and ere long I fulfilled my promise.

‘Godwin,’ said Charles Lamb to his friend, ‘you have read more books that are not worth reading than any man in England!’ There is some truth and much exaggeration in all such sallies of wit. But this is not the place for a disquisition on the old English poets, dramatists, and prose-writers; it is needless to discuss at length their merits and defects here.

The importance of the treatise on Political Justice has surely been greatly overrated. The notion that any serious danger was to be apprehended from its influence on the public mind was perfectly preposterous. Utter impracticability is the most striking feature of the work. It is incredible that any one, however weak and timorous, really considered it dangerous and mischievous. It suited the ends of trading alarmists to affect to believe, and to represent, that it was a formidable production; for during the infectious terror diffused around by the French

Revolution the trade in alarm was carried on to a great extent: it was sometimes lucrative, and, moreover, it was very easy, for a man incapable of anything else could at least pretend to be frightened. On the other hand, the merits of the book were much too highly estimated by its admirers. There is little of novelty in it; it contains nothing so absurd as not to have been said already by some of the philosophers—of the French philosophers. The style and composition are cold, crude, indigested; it is never so frigid, although always frigid, as when the author desires to be warm; and it never crawls and creeps so low as when he would rise on high, and seeks to soar. I used sometimes to presume to laugh at it, to turn it to ridicule, to the great annoyance of Shelley, who struggled vehemently to defend the style, as well as to prop up the speculations and sophisms of the halting sage. 'There are more Its in it,' I boldly affirmed, 'than in any other book of the same bulk.' I sometimes counted the number in a page, in proof of my assertion. 'It was a mere iteration,' I said; 'an incessant iteration of the word IT from the beginning to the end.' Yet, with all its many and great defects, it is a work of considerable merit, containing various ingenious problems, speculations, theories, and doubts, well worthy of a careful perusal, and calm and patient consideration. So also is *The Enquirer*, a subsequent work by the same author, of smaller dimensions, less pretentious, and which attracted less attention and produced less hostility.

This passage from *Political Justice* was at one time in everybody's mouth; it was illustrative of the completion which the endless perfectibility of the human species would some day receive upon earth. 'It is by no means clear, to make use of a familiar instance, that hereafter a plough may not be turned into a field, and perform its office without the need of superintendence.' 'And that a needle,' it was likewise said, 'might not in like manner be turned loose upon a piece of linen, and it would one day make a shirt of itself.' These expectations, if such they may be called, were quoted in those days as extreme and laughable instances of presumption, credulity, and insanity. Nevertheless, we now read of steam-ploughs, and we may view sewing-machines, by which, to a considerable extent, forebodings once deemed dangerous, impious, and revolutionary, have been realized. The recent triumphs of modern mechanical art, of mind over matter, have thrown ancient ingenuity, even of the highest order, sadly into the shade: let us take one instance. 'In Egypt I saw Cleopatra's Needle,' a young lady returning





SHELLEY'S HOUSE AT BISHOPGATE, WINDSOR PARK

from her school in England to her home in India, wrote lately to her friends, 'but I thought very little of it, I assure you, after having seen the sewing-machine in London.'

People are used to talk very positively of Shelley's principles, and solemnly to assure the world, which does not care a straw about the matter, that they do not participate or concur in them. I knew Shelley more intimately than any man, but I never could discern in him any more than two fixed principles. The first was a strong, irrepressible love of liberty; of liberty in the abstract, and somewhat after the pattern of the ancient republics, without reference to the English constitution, respecting which he knew little and cared nothing, heeding it not at all. The second was an equally ardent love of toleration of all opinions, but more especially of religious opinions; of toleration, complete, entire, universal, unlimited; and, as a deduction and corollary from which latter principle, he felt an intense abhorrence of persecution of every kind, public or private. He certainly was at all times prone to discuss, to attack, or defend the curious speculations which abound in the writings of William Godwin, and of divers French authors of that age, but he never seriously and in good earnest adopted their startling and unhealthy paradoxes.

Bysshe's uncle, John Shelley, who was his father's half-brother, and was much younger, nearly twenty years younger, than 'old Timotheus', called on him several times. He was a short, dumpy man, of a plain and rather common appearance, and far inferior to his elder brother in stature and vigour. He treated Bysshe with kindness, with marked civility and respect; and he seemed to have the good sense and penetration to perceive, that his family had reason to be proud of a young poet and philosopher of divine promise. He regretted that he was not on better terms with his father, and that the latter was so unreasonable, and he invited his nephew to visit him at Penshurst, who was not inclined to accept the invitation. He disliked his aunt, and complained of her pride and inordinate pretensions, with what foundation I know not; and that she was mean and stingy, except for purposes of ostentation, as in entertaining the French emigrant nobility. In estimating his judgment of his relatives, as well as of other persons, I express in this instance a caution, which is always implied, that considerable allowance ought to be made for a poetic and imaginative temperament. Mr. T. Shelley suffered at times severely from gout. On one occasion he was very seriously indisposed, in

considerable danger indeed, from a sharp attack of gout in the stomach. He occupied, during his illness, a small room on the ground floor at Field Place. Bysshe's sisters told me that they well remembered seeing their brother several times a day watching and listening at the door of the sickroom, to try to discover how his father was, how he was getting on; he was then about fourteen years of age, and at that time he was exceedingly fond of his father. The poor Eton boy, in his filial solicitude and tender anxiety, standing thus on the watch, is a pleasing and natural picture. Surely it was not well done; it was injudicious, and worse, by a harsh, intemperate, despotical exercise of paternal authority, to alienate a youth of such kindly feelings, and to lose for ever so warm and affectionate a heart. When he was not crossed, Mr. T. Shelley is represented by those who knew him best, to have been a kind man. Acts of kindness towards Tom Medwin have been related to me, and also towards other persons.

It was early in the summer of the year 1813, and, I believe, under the tranquil auspices of the able and mute Quaker physician, with whom I had a silent interview two or three months previously, that the elder of Harriet's two children came into the world, and nearly two years after her marriage. I have not got the exact date of this important event. I have read in some periodical that it took place at Cooke's Hotel, in Dover Street; this I think is a mistake. They removed from Half-Moon Street to a small house in a quiet back street in Pimlico, of which I have forgotten the name. I called there pretty frequently, taking it in my way to inquire after the mother and daughter, and I always received a favourable report of their well-being. All the matrons, prophetesses, predicted that as the good Harriet got over it so quickly and so well she must be a strong little woman, and would certainly live a long time, and have a very large family. The first time I called there was so soon after the birth of the child that it is hardly possible to suppose that she could have been removed thither from Dover Street. The situation had been chosen in order to be near a very agreeable lady, to whom Bysshe was warmly attached, and who had lodgings a few doors off in the same retired street.

I never set foot in the house; my visits did not extend beyond the door. They did not remain there long—not above a month, I think. The little girl was named Ianthé Eliza. She received the latter name, doubtless, in honour of the guardian angel, who

still continued to officiate, occasionally at least, in that capacity. Ianthe, violet flower, or violet, is a name of Greek origin, fetched immediately from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, being the name of a girl, to possess whom another girl, Iphis, was transformed into a youth:

potiturque sua puer Iphis Ianthe.

The fable is pleasing, and the name pretty; yet as the young father had so many good old names amongst the ladies of his own family, it is a pity that he did not prefer one of them to so fantastical an appellation. The Yankee Cockney practice of bestowing flowers of fancy names has a vulgarity, affectation, and pretension about it, and was unworthy of him. It was better adapted for the issue of a metropolitan rhymester than for a gentleman's daughter. This accession to his family did not appear to afford him any gratification, or to create an interest. He never spoke of his child to me, and to this hour I never set eyes on her. This I regret, as I believe she is a most estimable person, and in every respect worthy of her parents, and, moreover, suitably married; Ianthe the second having found a second Iphis, it is presumed, without any transformation. I often asked Harriet to let me see her little girl, but she always made some excuse. She was asleep, being dressed, or had gone out, or was unwell. The child had some blemish, though not a considerable one, in one of her eyes; and this, I believe, was the true and only reason why her mother did not choose to exhibit her. She could not bear, herself a beauty, that I should know, such was her weakness, that one so nearly connected with herself was not perfectly beautiful.

Although I did not visit the young cock bird in his breeding-cage during the few weeks he inhabited it, I sometimes met him at the house of our common friends, and several times in particular at the adjacent lodgings of the lady friend, for whose sake he had emigrated to Pimlico. She was an amiable and accomplished old lady, and tolerably agreeable, but too much of the French school to be quite so, and the greater part of her associates were odious. I generally found there two or three sentimental young butchers, an eminently philosophical tinker, and several very unsophisticated medical practitioners, or medical students, all of low origin, and vulgar and offensive manners. They sighed, turned up their eyes, retailed philosophy, such as it was, and swore by William Godwin and *Political Justice*; acting, moreover, and very clumsily, the parts of Petrarchs, Werters, St. Leons, and Fleetwoods. This strange selection was made,

this queer medley was brought together, partly from a certain French love of presiding over, ruling, forming, and managing, and it was imagined—a great mistake—that low people would prove the most tractable and submissive; and partly through the love of equality, of levelling, and fraternizing.

I bore with the rabble rout for a little while, on account of my friend, and because I could there enjoy his precious society; and they had made him believe that their higgledy-piggledy ways were very right and fine, and conducive to progress and perfectibility. However, a young English gentleman, of a liberal education, an Etonian and Oxonian, soon grew weary of persons so ill-suited to his aristocratical feelings and habits, and began to train off.

The last pilgrimage I made to the abode of perfect republican equality, I met Bysshe near the door, towards which he was advancing with mighty strides and his wonted rapidity. I seized his arm, and said: 'Come along; let us take a walk together, let us leave the sentimentalists to ripen for the gallows by themselves!'

He laughed so long and so loud at a sally that strongly arrested his sympathies, and I joined him so heartily in the mirthful and contemptuous explosion, that several of the good people of the quiet street opened their windows, and looked out to discover the cause of the unusual disturbance. Whilst he was hesitating, I still kept hold of his arm, and finally I carried him off as lawful prize. We had a long walk to the westward, through fields, and afterwards we enjoyed a cup of strong tea, or rather, to tell the whole truth, many cups, in a still coffee-room, at Kensington.

'How I wish I could be as fastidious and exclusive as you are,' he sighed forth, as we walked; 'but I cannot——'

A good-humoured, paternal old waiter brought the kettle to our table so often, which he always kindly assured us was 'byling'—and the kettle fully confirmed his assurance—that he was provoked to remark: 'You like your tea, gentlemen, I think!'

We finished our tea at last, but not until we had sworn in our cups to cut the unprejudiced, levelling confraternity.

From the quiet street in Pimlico they retired to Bracknell, a still quieter place, where Shelley took a small house with the attractive title, 'High Elms', with his ordinary purpose of remaining in it for ever. I did not visit him, because I was about to proceed to the north, to spend the long vacation there, as usual, before he was well settled in his pleasant retirement.



HIGH ELMS, BRACKNELL, *July 27, 1813.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I was disappointed at being unable to call on you on Sunday morning. My presence was required at home, but as I shall be in town in a few days, I expect still to have the pleasure of seeing you before your journey to the North.

Tell me when you depart from London. I am anxious to see you, or if I cannot, to write to you at greater length. It is far most probable that we shall remain here until the spring.

I know you will be happy even to receive these few lines, and therefore I do not wait until to-morrow, when I should write a longer letter.

Your very affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

To T. J. H.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

ONE evening, at the commencement of August, I took my seat on the box, or top, of the Edinburgh mail, and in due course, by a progress which in those days we were so unenlightened as to consider rapid, I reached my destination. That amount of vacation which I annually gave to myself, I fully and freely imparted to my law books; pleading and pleaders, with all their counts, common and uncommon, and pleas, general and special, I left behind me with my books in London, to keep holiday also, or to do worse. I usually devoted my vacation to a careful study of the Greek classics, but this autumn I had to redeem two pledges. I had undertaken, at the suggestion of a lady, to read *Sir Charles Grandison*; and I had promised William Godwin to take Geoffrey Chaucer in hand. The day after my arrival I borrowed *Grandison* of my aunt, my father's sister, who lent me the numerous, well-thumbed volumes joyfully; observing that it was a good sign in a young person to desire to read that excellent work. The same morning I took down from its shelf in my father's library a fine old edition in folio and black-letter, a volume which I had never opened before, of Chaucer's works. I found the proceedings of the most exemplary, faultless personages in Richardson's famous novel extremely tiresome, and I passed over the early portion of the long-winded narrative too rapidly for edification; but my attention was powerfully arrested, riveted, by the Lady Clementina and her family. I experienced little difficulty with Chaucer, less even than the assurances of my adviser had led me to expect. The *Canterbury Tales* delighted me; so much, indeed, that I read them a second time some five or six years afterwards, in Tyrwhitt's edition, on the summer circuit. The other poems of Chaucer contain many striking passages of infinite poetical merit, but on the whole they proved tedious; yet I persevered, and steadily read the *Romance of the Rose*, and so on, quite to the end of the big book. I looked into sundry old English writers subsequently, at different times, through the like suggestions. It really seemed to me that these good people were dead, quite dead, fairly dead; they had died a natural death, and it was vain to try to resuscitate them.

That spirited publisher, William Caxton, selected the productions of his unrivalled press with great judgment, no doubt, and in accordance with the taste of the fifteenth century, but not by any means of the nineteenth. Jane Shore probably found them agreeable reading, I did not: to dispute concerning tastes is a vain thing. If the lovely Jane had repaired to Skinner Street with one of Caxton's new volumes, wet from the press, under her arm, and had read it aloud to William Godwin, as the lovely Harriet was accustomed to read aloud to me, the venerable sage, in sooth, would have thought it most amusing, and truly delightful.

I did not receive any letters from Bysshe, or any account of his proceedings, from himself or Harriet, during the period of nearly three months, which I passed in the north. I heard afterwards that he spent some weeks agreeably at High Elms; but he did not remain there for ever, or even until the spring, by reason of his own inherent restlessness, and the pernicious action of disturbing forces. He had a long visit from an amiable and interesting family, to whom he was warmly attached, and who doted upon him. They came to him in a body—father, mother, and five fine children. His visitors were devoted, heart and soul, to the return to nature and to vegetable diet, which we may readily believe was faithfully observed whilst his orthodox friends were under his hospitable roof. He had also two or three neighbours, in whose superior society he found pleasure and amusement.

The cheerful village, where the wanderer had pitched his tent, was within a pleasant walk of London, according to our estimation of distance in those youthful days, and with our habits and practice of walking. There was every motive to induce him to remain content and comfortable in his present position, and none whatever for changing it. I also followed exactly the canonical observances of the vegetable church of nature; and I found them far from disagreeable in the country, and during the summer and autumn. I did not stumble upon anybody who was disposed to follow my example, however excellent or edifying it might seem. It is true that I did not seek to proselytize, or desire to attract followers or make converts. Nevertheless, nobody objected. I represented my singular fare merely as a whim—a fancy; such, in truth, it was, and I was freely permitted to follow my fancy.

I sought exercise and amusement in shooting, and I devoted much time to that diversion, as I did for several years. I shot,

during this season, game which I was not to eat. My way of gaining an appetite was in direct opposition to my mode of satisfying it. A striking incongruity—a patent contradiction; and such my existence—at once bloodthirsty and bloodless—would certainly have been, if I had taken up my line of feeding on the principles of Pythagoras, or of the Brahmins, or perhaps upon any principles whatever. But I was commonly contented to leave their fine, fixed principles to wiser heads than my own; to slay or to scare partridges from sunrise to sunset, for three or four days in every week; and to return home at dusk and refresh and restore myself, first, with vegetables and fruit, and finally with copious potations of tea.

On the intervening days of rest I read Chaucer's ponderous, black-letter tome. It occupied much of my time, yet I did not altogether neglect the Greek classics. On the contrary, I found leisure to read carefully, and with unspeakable delight, nine of the eleven comedies of Aristophanes; the other two plays I had read before. For that purpose I borrowed a nice, readable edition in octavo of a friend, who had devoted himself exclusively to Greek literature. The painfully minute characters of my little pocket Aristophanes were too trying even for eyes that had then seen only twenty-one years and a few months.

I have sometimes compared the calm, stationary, I may almost say retrograde, life of the owner of the octavo edition of the one inestimable sample of the old comedy that alone remains to us, with the troubled, restless, innovating career of the roving occupant of High Elms. I am now attempting to delineate the eccentric orbit of the latter luminary; let the former describe for himself his steady revolution during a triennial period round a single centre and sun of Grecian learning. The marked diversity in the motions of two distinguished scholars will be curious, amusing, and possibly not without instruction.

The very obliging lender of Brunck's Aristophanes was formerly a member, not without distinction, of a college of high repute in Oxford.

'I rise early; I always did; and I take one mouthful of air before breakfast—no more. I begin to read immediately after breakfast, that I may get a walk and appetite before dinner, which is essential.'

He spoke modestly of his dinner, but we will hope that he invariably made such a meal as, in a wealthy establishment, a clerk in holy orders ought to make.

'I have my tea pretty soon after dinner; it freshens me up.

I cannot read again until I have had my tea. When I have finished my book, in the summer—in the winter it would be ridiculous—I take a turn round the garden, when I am at home; when I am by the seaside, on the sands close to the sea. I am not much of a supper-man; I never was; but I love just to play with a crab before going to bed; or with something of the kind, and to swallow a spoonful or two of warm negus.

‘I read nothing but Greek. I have a three-years’ course of Greek authors, which I go over every three years.’

He promised to give me a list of the authors, with dates showing the time which he gave to each. I reproach myself for letting the opportunity slip; for never having procured what I might then have obtained at any time.

‘I read a few pages of Virgil and of Cicero two or three times in the year, just to satisfy myself that although they are very clever, very good in their way certainly, they are not to be compared with the Greek writers, but are immeasurably inferior in all respects; that it is a waste of time for a man who can read Greek to read their writings.

‘On Sunday it is different. I do not read the classical authors; it would not be proper. I look over the newspaper very lightly; once a week is enough. I read the Septuagint, the New Testament, and perhaps a homily or two of Chrysostom; in the original, of course.

‘A newspaper once a week, and very little of it, is sufficient surely. I will not say absolutely, that since the age of Pericles nothing has happened in the world, that a man of sense ought to care about. But since the publication of the last Greek author of acknowledged merit—I will not say the last classic, for I would not be illiberal or too restrictive—there has been no event that we need trouble ourselves much about. Of course, I except our blessed religion—that is a thing quite apart; I say nothing about that now; I speak only of profane matters—of secular affairs. When two or three scholars get together, we talk, you know, like heathens.

‘Homer is an exception to my three-years’ course—the only one. I read him every year.

‘I reside in a country town; and I go every year to the seaside in the summer, during the long days, for a month. I read a book of the Iliad every day before dinner, and a book of the Odyssey daily after dinner. In a month there are twenty-four weekdays; there being twenty-four books in each poem, it just does it.

‘The seaside is the proper place to read Homer; he speaks so

much of the sea. I throw in the "Hymns"—there are commonly two or three rainy days in the four weeks, when I cannot take a walk; so I always contrive to throw in the "Hymns" and the "Frogs and Mice".

'I always use the "Oxford Homer", as it is called. The Greek text, in four volumes octavo; without the Latin interpretation, but with the Greek scholia of Didymus, or whoever he was. I make use of common editions,' he showed me several of them, 'without many notes; for if I had to read many notes I should never get through. I use no other lexicon than "Scapula"; I find it quite sufficient.'

He produced a folio edition of Scapula, in which by long use he had worn a hole that would have contained a pair of stockings. He continued his triennial course of reading without interruption for thirty years, and consequently read Homer through thirty times; the other Greek classics ten times.

'I have looked into the translations of Homer: they are very poor affairs. I have heard much of a German translation, by Voss, but I do not understand German; I am quite content with the original. I have looked into Cowper's: I like his translation of Homer as little as I like his religion! I never published anything; I never wrote a line for publication. I have always been most unwilling to increase the sum of human errors: it is large enough already, to say the least.'

To have written a good book on the Tranquillity of Life, as the Scotchman, Volussenus Wilson did, is something, but it is far more to have actually and so admirably practised it. I repeat my regret that I did not get from him his itinerary of three years' journey and progress through the principal Greek authors; it would have been a literary curiosity, and interesting to many students, as the regular orbit of an ordinary mind, although of a very high order, to whom the erratic course of a transcendent genius—of a comet that blazes across the zenith once in a century, would be perplexing and incomprehensible.

This excellent scholar and clergyman had no family; his clerical duties were none, or trifling; he was not a man to neglect any duty, of superior, or inferior, obligation; and he had a competent, a moderate income, derived from private sources, and independent of ecclesiastical stipends and benefices.

CHESTER STREET, Oct. 21, 1813.

After allowing your elegant and friendly letter to remain so long unanswered, you will perhaps suspect that I am incapable

of making a due estimate of its merits; but the truth is, I am a reluctant writer, unless stimulated to the use of my pen by painful emotions. This peculiarity of my nature will, I trust, at least acquit me of not receiving pleasure from your ready compliance with my request; for I do not forget that Clementina's woes were introduced to your acquaintance at my suggestion, and that I likewise urged you to favour me with your opinion of this celebrated composition, of which the episode is incomparably the most interesting part.

In your estimate of the character of Grandison, you must keep in view that Richardson designed to paint a perfect *civilized* being, whose passions are always obedient to his reason. She never for one moment quits the helm—a disgusting object enough, I will confess, contrasted with the wild and beautiful starts of passion so conspicuous in his fair mistress. But the fidelity and consistency with which his hero is delineated and supported throughout the work, proves, indeed, what has never been denied to Richardson—the true character of genius.

In reading this voluminous novel, we never confound one object with another, and the images remain indelibly impressed on the mind. This, at least, was the judgment I formed of it years ago, for it is long since I wept over the artificial woes of Clementina, whose madness is the most touching picture of the kind, I believe, in the literature of any country. We have, indeed, the authority of an excellent scholar on this subject, Dr. Warton, who concludes his encomium on this masterly performance by saying, that he questions whether it would not be pedantry to prefer the madness of Orestes to Clementina's, or whether even Lear's has so many strokes of genuine passion. The author, who does not yield the palm to Euripides, or Shakespeare, has surely the strongest claim to our admiration and respect.

From this subject I turn to one, I am persuaded, not less interesting to you: your friends, the Shelleys, who were all well when we parted. Since their arrival in the north, where, I imagine, necessity will fix them for some time, we have had no tidings of them. The lady, whose welfare must be so important in your estimation was, as usual, very blooming and very happy, during the whole of our residence at Bracknell: Ianthe grown surprisingly, and Miss Westbrook ever smiling and serene. They have made an addition to their party, in the person of a cold scholar who, I think, has neither taste nor feeling. This Shelley will perceive, sooner or later; for his warm nature craves

sympathy, and I am convinced he will not meet with it in his new acquaintance.

My sister, who would be flattered by your inquiries, if she knew of them, was quite well a fortnight since. We all look with pleasure to your return; not omitting Mr. Lawrence, who always speaks of you as you deserve.

That the temper and habits of your associates do not meet all your wishes, is far from surprising me. I never yet found in the country of this distinguished isle enlightened and agreeable persons of either sex; they are too scattered for one to light upon them by accident. Even the capital is not too rich in unprejudiced thinkers; and upon those, society, with its frauds, lays so firm a claw, that half their merit is of necessity cast into the shade.

I read the first part of an early work of yours, and see it was the production of a very young man, some portions of which your mature judgment will not confirm. When we meet I will venture to discuss with you its beauties and defects.

Mr. N. has already acquitted himself of his agreeable debt to you, and, having of course talked of his health, it only remains for me to speak of the other members of my family, who would be pleased by your inquiries, if they were old enough to estimate the value of them. Octavia and Camilla, I think, you will find improved; my elder son progressing towards scholarship, and the younger boy fast into breeches; and Coraly light and nimble as a fairy.

I hope you will eat your Christmas dinner with us, whether you continue one of the holy or not, for no change of habits of such a nature can alter the esteem with which I subscribe myself

Your very sincere friend,

To T. J. H., Norton.

CORNELIA N.

It was from my fair correspondent that I first learnt that my young friends had taken themselves off to Edinburgh. I ignorantly supposed that Bysshe was living happily in his peaceful abode in Berkshire, and I wondered, so far as I could ever wonder at any of his proceedings, at his protracted silence, and vainly speculated on the possible causes of it. No doubt I addressed at least one letter to Bracknell, to be read only by the winds that played in the tops of the High Elms. I confess I was surprised at the unexpected intelligence of his sudden and absurd flight, of his second and causeless visit to the metropolis of Scotland; where, of course, he would remain for ever, as



usual; or, it was imagined at least, that necessity would fix them there for some time. It was falsely pretended that necessity had driven them thither. The journey was performed, I believe, in that carriage for the price of which I had been arrested in the spring. As a measure of rigid economy and a matter of strict necessity, they had posted four hundred miles at an enormous expense. I marvelled at the rash and extravagant delusion, and was curious to discover by what evil counsellor it had been put into their heads, but I could never find it out.

At the end of October, and soon after the receipt of the charming letter which brought to me the unwelcome tidings of this overt act of folly, I returned to London. I resumed my professional duties and legal education in the Temple. I consecrated my evenings, whenever I was at liberty, and my Sundays invariably, to the delightful society of my amiable, accomplished, and intellectual friends. Nobody could give me any news of the fugitive, whose absence from our circles was deeply deplored; and the ruthless marauders were bitterly execrated who had cruelly despoiled us of our beloved companion, and choicest and most exquisite ornament. I was constantly reminded of the choice of Hercules; of that fable, or apologue, in which the half-god is placed between Virtue and Vice, who contend for the possession of him. Thus was it with our three-quarter god; there was always a contest for him, between forward, sponging vulgarity, that would live out of him, on the one hand—and on the other, the modest, fostering elegance, that cherished him, and would cheerfully have maintained him, had it been needful. Unfortunately, and by reason of the fourth part of mortality's frailty, that clogged and weighed down his otherwise divine nature, the poor fellow, unlike Hebe's husband, did not on every occasion make the more eligible selection. Our uneasy speculations were at last terminated by a letter, which came to hand one calendar month after my return. Here it is; may it be as acceptable to every reader as it was to us!

EDINBURGH, *Nov.* 26, 1813.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I have written to you several times since I received your letter at Bracknell. My letters were directed to you at Stopton in Durham, but I suppose that you had nothing particular to communicate in return—as, indeed, their contents were not of extraordinary importance.

I am happy to hear that you have returned to London, as I

shall shortly have the pleasure of seeing you again. I shall return to London alone. My evenings will often be spent at the N.'s, where, I presume, you are no unfrequent visitor.

Your novel is now printed. I need not assure you with what pleasure this extraordinary and animated tale is perused by me. Every one to whom I have shown it agrees with me in admitting that it bears indisputable marks of a singular and original genius. Write more like this. Delight us again with a character so natural and energetic as Alexy—vary again the scene with an uncommon combination of the most natural and simple circumstances: but do not persevere in writing after you grow weary of your toil; 'aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus'; and the swans and the Eleutherarchs are proofs that you were a little sleepy.

I have for some time given myself to study. I have read Tacitus, many of Cicero's philosophical works (who is, in my estimation, one of the most admirable characters the world ever produced), and Homer's Odyssey. I am now studying Laplace, *Système du Monde*, and am determined not to relax until I have attained considerable proficiency in the physical sciences.

I have examined Hume's reasonings with respect to the non-existence of external things, and, I confess, they appear to me to follow from the doctrines of Locke. What am I to think of a philosophy which conducts to such a conclusion?—*Sed hæc hactenus.*

A new acquaintance is on a visit with us this winter. He is a very mild, agreeable man, and a good scholar. His enthusiasm is not very ardent, nor his views very comprehensive: but he is neither superstitious, ill-tempered, dogmatical, nor proud.

I have translated the two essays of Plutarch, *περὶ σαρκοφαγίας*, which we read together. They are very excellent. I intend to comment upon them, and to reason in my preface concerning the Orphic and Pythagoric system of diet. Adieu! Believe me to be ever sincerely attached to you. My dear friend,

I am, yours affectionately,

To T. J. H.

P. B. SHELLEY.

When will the Dead Letter Office give up her dead? At that joyful resurrection of lost, departed thoughts we may read not only the several letters so strangely misdirected to me at Stopton in Durham, but many other of my friend's precious communications, which, on other occasions, unfortunately miscarried. We see, however, from this single letter, the small remnant that was

saved, how true he had been to his nature—an ardent, sedulous, enthusiastic student. We perceive also that, with the like truth, he was in as great a hurry to quit Edinburgh as he had ever been to reach it. He was desirous to quit it by himself; to swim to the shore alone, to get speedily out of that ocean of delights into which he had inconsiderately plunged. This he was not permitted to do.

Not very long after the receipt of his letter, but how long I do not remember, he came back to London—not a solitary, as he had proposed, and free, but in custody. He entered, most unexpectedly, one of our evening circles, together with some of his associates, and with an abruptness on the part of the latter that was not altogether relished. Upon the like principles of philosophical frugality the return to London had also been performed by post. On their way to or from Scotland, I think, the party had made some deviation into the Lake district. I never heard the details of his second northern progress. Bysshe never spoke to me on the subject; he seemed to have no pleasure in the retrospect. He looked forward with fervid eagerness, and seldom did he review the past with satisfaction. I must except his sojourn at Oxford; to this he always recurred with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret: there only did I ever see him completely at home. Time wears on, passing by with an equal foot, whether we sit still in an easy chair in our study, conning over the Greek classics in a mazy round, thrumming and thumbing Scapula, and travelling only to the end, wind and weather permitting, of the broad gravel-walk in the vicarage garden; or whether, flying off at a tangent, we dash away on the instant to the farthest corners and most hidden nooks of Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, in order that we may rush wildly back again, posting up to London in utter destitution and with four horses.

The year 1814 had come upon us. In that year—and at the beginning of the year, I think—Shelley published a work entitled *A Refutation of Deism: in a Dialogue*. It is handsomely, expensively, and very incorrectly printed, in octavo. It was published in a legal sense, unquestionably; whether it was also published in a publisher's sense, and offered for sale, I know not, but I rather think that it was: the preface informs us that it was intended it should be. I never heard that anybody bought a copy; the only copy I ever saw is that which my friend kindly sent to me: it is inscribed by his own hand on the title page: 'To his friend, T. Jefferson Hogg, from P. B. S.' I never heard

it mentioned any further than this, that two or three of the author's friends told me, that it had been sent as a present. It is a short dialogue, comprised in 101 pages of large print. Eusebes and Theosophus discourse together, and dispute with each other, much as the author himself loved to dispute, when he could find an opponent; whenever Eusebes could find a Theosophus and get up an antagonistic dialogue. It is written in his powerful, energetic, contentious style, but it contains nothing new or important, and was composed and printed also, in a hurry. He never spoke of it to me, or in my presence. It attracted no attention; and doubtless Shelley himself soon discovered that it did not merit it. The subject of vegetable diet is brought in, dragged in, and in a crude, undigested form. The whole matter is disposed of briefly, triumphantly, and dogmatically, in a single paragraph, in these words:

It is the necessary consequence of the organization of man that his stomach should digest his food. It inevitably results also from his gluttonous and unnatural appetite for the flesh of animals, that his frame be diseased, and his vigour impaired. But in neither of these cases is adaptation of means to end to be perceived. Unnatural diet, and the habits consequent upon its use, are the means, and every complication of frightful disease is the end. But to assert that these means were adapted to this end by the Creator of the world, or that human caprice can avail to traverse the precautions of omnipotence, is absurd. These are the consequences of the properties of organized matter, and it is a strange perversion of the understanding, to argue that a certain sheep was created to be devoured by a certain individual of the human species, when the conformation of the latter, as is manifest to the most superficial student of comparative anatomy, classes him with those animals who feed on fruit and vegetables.

A long quotation is given in a note from Plutarch's treatise on eating flesh. It is in the original Greek, without any translation either in English or in Latin; a convincing proof that the dialogue was not addressed to unlearned readers. Plutarch shows very clearly that the internal structure of a human being is not suited to digest raw flesh, nor is the outward form of man so constructed that he can conveniently seize upon, and worry, and devour a stag, or a bullock, or even a kid, or a lamb, after the manner of a lion, a bear, or a wolf. This is perfectly true, but this is not the question. It would take a good many Plutarchs and Porphyrys to prove, even with the powerful aid of Joe Ritson and Dr. Lambe, that man may not add a little cooked meat to his vegetables. A squire first catches his hare by his greyhound; secondly, he dresses it by his cook; and, thirdly, he



JOHN KEATS

*From the death mask in the National Portrait Gallery*



eats it with a mealy potato and a slice of bread, by the assistance of a friend; and, fourthly and lastly, he digests it at his ease, in the same good company, pouring a glass or two of good old port wine upon it.

This comfortable mode of living, say the philosophers, being universally adopted by the gentry and clergy throughout merry England, is the fruitful parent of physical and moral suffering. It is the cause that a flea-bitten Scotchman has the itch; that a dog has the mange; and that an Irish hodman, having taken too much whisky overnight, at waking his mother, and falling from a ladder, pitching upon his head, and fracturing his skull, dies upon the spot. You cannot cut down a fir tree with your teeth, and saw it into lengths with your nails. Therefore, says Plutarch, in spite of your axes and saws, you shall have no planks, no inch deals!

Whether the immortal Goethe could have produced the poems of the Divine Shelley, I will not presume to decide, or even to inquire; but I will assert confidently that Shelley could not have written Goethe's novels. Whilst he was still a boy—a boy of magnificent promise—he threw off hastily two extravagant romances, and published them as hastily. He never brought forth another novel, but he was often nibbling at one: he had commonly some tale on the anvil. He used to transmit choice passages to me, an ill-natured Aristarchus, a very Zoilus; for he said that I discouraged him. I am in part, not wholly, guilty. I encouraged and exhorted him to proceed, but to proceed, for the most part, in a more sober, subdued tone; to give a little repose and respite to the nerves, spirits, and feelings of the harassed reader. A raging sea, an eruption, an earthquake, a whirlwind, must not last for ever; not even for a long time. He was fascinated by *The Sorrows of Werter*, who has not been? and he was of opinion that a continuation, or rather an enlargement and amplification of the narrative was demanded. Albert certainly ought to have made a splash; on the contrary, he exhibited a culpable indifference, in taking things coolly, like an honest German as he was. His wife was dear to him, no doubt, and with abundant reason; but so also were his sausage with cabbage, his Rhenish wine, his Bavarian beer, and especially his pipe. If, therefore, by an undue sensibility to the young ladies' vagaries, he had brought on an indigestion, or broken in upon the hours sacred to his tranquil enjoyments, he would have disturbed that balance and equipoise of soul which constitute the perfection of reason.

I appended my impertinent remarks, and sent the papers back, as he desired. They were destroyed, or lost. However, I found one morsel, it appears, to relate to the amplification of Werter; and the worthy Albert is supposed to be doing the right sort of thing, in the right way. I had omitted to return it. Would that I had been as negligent on other occasions! It is in Shelley's handwriting: it has never been published, and the subject is familiar and popular.



## CHAPTER XXIX

### FRAGMENT OF A NOVEL

You deceive yourself terribly, my friend; it is another source of proof to me that you should have written to Charlotte, as you have.

It convinces me at the same time of your real sincerity, great, self-deceptive, continued vehemence of passion, which borrows respect, deference from distance. It convinces me more forcibly than ever how unfit it is that you should live near us; it convinces me that I, by permitting it, should act a subservient part in the promotion of yours and Charlotte's misery. I am more and more convinced, that from a connection such as this, even intellectual, nothing but misery can arise: your passions impose upon your reason, if this is not evident to your apprehension. I either actually do, or merely affect to put self out of the question; this we will not discuss; if similar effects follow, the consideration of causes must be useless labour. You say you fear that you have lost my good opinion. 'Good opinion' is very comprehensive, certainly. I no longer estimate your powers of resisting passion so highly as once I did. Certainly, I no longer consider your reason as superior to the sophistry of feeling, as once it was. How can I? to what have you yielded? How terrible, how complete has been the perversion of that reason I once almost fancied omnipotent. I admit the distinction which you make between mistake and crime. I heartily acquit you of the latter. Yet how great has been your mistake; even now does it continue. You never could think it *virtue* to act as you desired. You might, indeed, have been so far imposed upon by feeling as to imagine that virtue did not forbid it. I said I thought you were insincere—true. I do not wonder that you shudder at the accusation. It appears to me perfectly natural that you should at the same time be disguising, veiling, palliating; you should think yourself the pattern of disinterestedness, which once you were, which once I hope again to behold you. I said you were insincere. I said so because I thought so. I still think so; but you are imposed upon by feeling the contamination of falsehood

is far, far from you. One expression in your long letter, your last letter, convinces me that you are still enthralled by feeling. It is merely an instance. 'I must, I will convince you, etc. I must, or——, the alternative is terrible, but decided. You shall believe, etc., or, when *too late*, you shall feel.' This gives me pain. This proves to me that, so far from being now under the guidance of reason, you wish to enforce my belief in you by an act, which itself is inadequate to the excitement of any belief, but that of *your* selfishness, or to *revenge* my want of it by this very act, which you know would embitter my existence. Else what means 'you *shall* feel *when too late*'?

This, my friend, is not convincing. It might be enough (supposing I thought you remained in the state of mind which dictated that) to make me *say*, I believe in you, but not to *make* me believe in you. What will then make me again believe you to be what you were? Simply to resume that character which once gained the credence, the loss of which you complain of. Think, reason, methodize. Your present incapacity for all these; my conviction that your exposure to Charlotte's attractions would augment that incapacity, are the limits of the change of my opinion regarding you. It appears to me that I am acting as your friend—your disinterested friend—by objecting to your living near us at present. Certainly, I am depriving myself of the very great pleasure of your society: this, however, is necessary; to this I submit.

You hint in your letter to Charlotte your obligation to *me* for introducing you to her. Certainly, if I deserve any disservice at your hands, it is for unwittingly exposing you to the temptation and consequent misery of this very intercourse. Here, again, I see that feeling peeping out which would destroy our hopes again. Think not that I am otherwise than your friend; a friend to you, now more fervent, more devoted than ever, for misery endears to us those whom we love. You are, you shall be my bosom friend. You have been so but in one instance, and there you have deceived yourself. Still, let us continue what we have ever been. I will remain unchanged, so *shall* you *hereafter*. Let us forget this affair; let us erase from the memory that ever it had being. Consider what havoc one year, the last year of our lives, has made in memory. How can you say then, that good will not come; that we shall not again be what we were! Good and evil are in an ever-varying routine of change. If I am wretched this month, the arising of another may see me happy.

You will say, perhaps, that it is well for *me* to reason; I am cold, phlegmatic, unfeeling, that I compromise for those sins which I love, by railing against those, which are matters of indifference. In the first part of this charge there may be some truth, I have more than once felt the force of this. Is constitutional temperament the criterion of morality? Believe me that this more than excuses to me the present irrationality, incongruity, and inconsistency of your words and actions; I cannot avoid, however, seeing that they are incongruous, nor seeing it, avoid earnestly desiring that they may be otherwise.

Prove to me satisfactorily, that virtue exists not, that it is a fabric as baseless as a schoolboy's vision—then take life, I will no more with it. I would not consent to live, to breathe, to vegetate, if this vegetation simply went on to imbibe for no other end, than its own proper nutriment the juices which surrounded it. Does the vegetable reason on the good it does to the air, when it absorbs azote? does the panther destroy the antelope for the public good? does the lion love the lioness for his sake or her own? Prove that *man* too is necessarily this; my last act may be an act of this very selfishness, but it would be an act precluding the possibility of more of it, and I would leave the world to such, as could bear to inhabit its surface. Prove this, and I will say you have acted wisely. The argument concerning morality mentioned in your last letter was intended for this. But though I think you insincere (though without being conscious of it), I do not think that this is your opinion now; yet, stay, what did I remark in your letter to Charlotte? It proves, at the same time, the sincerity, undisguisedness of your passion, yet the insincerity which I have remarked as secretly betraying you.

You talk of female excellence, female perfection. Man is in your declamation a being infinitely inferior, whose proudest efforts at virtue are but mockeries of his impotence. Charlotte is the personification of all this contrast to man, the impassionateness of the most ardent passion that ever burned in human breast could never have dictated a compliment (I will not say, a piece of flattery) more excessive. She perceived it (for she has shown me your letter), and remarked with much indignation on the repetition of that continued flattery, which you had made your theme ever since she knew you. I wish you would investigate the sources of this passion, my dear friend; you would find it derived its principal source from sensation.

Let your 'too, too great susceptibility of beauty', your very

own sincere expression in your letter to Charlotte suffice to convince you of the true state of your feelings. This caused your error primarily: nor can I wonder. I do not condemn, I pity; nor do I pity with contempt, but with sympathy, real sympathy. I hope I have shown you that I do not regard you as a *smooth-tongued traitor*; could I choose such for a friend? could I still love him with affection unabated, perhaps increased? Reason, plain reason, would tell you this could not be. How far gone must you have been in sophistry, self-deception, to think sensation in this, in any instance laudable.

I am not happy. I tell you so. My last letter was written in the acuteness of feeling; but do you wish that I should be happy? Reassure yourself, and then be assured that not a wish of my heart will remain ungratified, as respects you. I have but *one* other wish beside; to that, at present, I will not allude more. Charlotte will write to you to-morrow. May I require, that, as one proof of self-conquest, you will throw the letter into the fire, suppressing all thoughts of *adoration*, which I strongly suspect to arise from mere sensation, sentiment. But the letter will arrive first: it will be pressed to the lips, folded to the heart, imagination will dwell upon the hand that wrote it; how easy the transition to the wildest reveries of ungratified desire!

Oh, how the sophistry of the passions has changed you! The sport of a woman's whim, the plaything of her inconsistencies, the bauble with which she is angry, the footstool of her exaltation! Assert yourself, be what you were. Love, adore; it will exalt your nature, bid you, a man, be a God! Combine it, if you will, with sensation, perhaps they are inseparable; be it so. But do not love one who *cannot* return it, who if she *could*, *ought* to stifle her desire to do so. Love is not a whirlwind that it is unvanquishable!

This epistle from Albert to Werter is forcibly written, with great power and energy; but it wants the warmth, the tenderness, of Goethe and Rousseau. The tone is rather that of the novels of William Godwin, or Holcroft; it is cold, bald, didactic, declamatory, rigid, rigid.

It is a real pleasure, a tranquil, contemplative, long-drawn pleasure, to write a novel; a great luxury! I speak from experience, for I once indulged in it myself; and, during a long vacation which I passed in London, I composed a novel. I walked every morning from the extreme west to the Temple, a distance of some five miles; I was always seated at my desk by

nine o'clock, and I continued writing until the clock struck four, when I walked home to dinner. This I did every day, except Sunday, for three or four months. It was in three volumes. I wrote it off freely, with scarcely a single erasure or alteration. The neat and natty Quaker, Thomas Paine, could hardly have produced fairer copy; but our valued friend would have written in a very different strain; no fictions, but only what he esteemed truths, home truths. Moreover, I wrote the whole of it with the same pen, just nibbing it from time to time, but not often, and it was only a stump when I began to write with it. Cardinal Chigi wrote for three years with the same pen; the Earl of Chesterfield, who relates the anecdote, says it was a proof of a little mind in His Eminence to notice such a trifle. We may congratulate ourselves, therefore, that little minds are still to be found amongst us.

The novel was never published. Several years after I had written it I was asked to contribute to the *Monthly Chronicle*. I sent some articles composed expressly for that periodical, and afterwards, not having leisure to write more such, I gave portions of my unpublished novel. The greater part—almost the whole, I believe, of the first volume—was printed thus; and if the *Monthly Chronicle* had not been discontinued, most probably the whole work would have appeared. It commences with No. 30, and terminates with No. 40, for then the chronicle ceased, under the title, *Some Recollections of Childhood*; a title not by any means applicable to the novel, but which was continued from some previous contributions, of which it was sufficiently descriptive. It attracted no notice or attention, I think; it was either too good, or not good enough for the public taste; the *Monthly Chronicle* itself, indeed, did not prosper; not being trashy enough for the readers of magazines.

However this may be, it is a great gratification to an author to write a work of fiction, and I wish that Shelley had enjoyed it also, as well as myself, and more than once. It is sweet for a sensitive mind to take refuge in imaginary scenes; and by writing much he would have learned at last to write with moderation and calmness, as a horse too fresh at starting becomes in the end, temperate through his own violence. I have sometimes thought of writing another tale, but I have always been distracted and diverted from this my diversion by other occupations and engagements, more lucrative, but less attractive.

To turn from the dominions of imagination to sober, sad realities, and to look back for a moment. Shelley had published

anonymously, and without a date, in the preceding year, I think, in a small, neatly printed pamphlet of twenty-three pages, his celebrated *Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, occasioned by the sentence which he passed on Mr. D. I. Eaton, as publisher of the third part of Paine's *Age of Reason*. It is written with force, fervour, and energy, and unflinching boldness—possibly, we should add, with a burning zeal on behalf of the freedom of speech, of the pen and the Press; and the author resolutely and eloquently enforces the motto of his title-page—that religious opinions are of too high a nature for human interference, *Deorum offensa Dis curæ* — on the extreme principles of absolute, universal, unlimited toleration. It would be impossible to satisfy a liberal curiosity by extracts, it is only by a perusal of the work itself, that its nature, scope, and purpose can be fully understood; and it ought to be read with a due consideration of the circumstances under which it was composed, in times before it was generally recognized that persecution for the expression of opinions on matters of religion, in whatever manner expressed, invariably defeats its object. Now let us return to our flock.

The good Harriet had fully recovered from the fatigues of her first effort of maternity, and, in fact, she had taken it easily. She was now in full force, vigour, and effect; roseate as ever, at times, perhaps, rather too rosy. She had entirely relinquished her favourite practice of reading aloud, which had been formerly a passion. I do not remember hearing her read even once after the birth of her child; the accustomed exercise of the chest had become fatiguing, or she was weary of it. Neither did she read much to herself; her studies, which had been so constant and exemplary, had dwindled away to nothing, and Bysshe had ceased to express any interest in them, and to urge her, as of old, to devote herself to the cultivation of her mind. When I called upon her she proposed a walk, if the weather was fine, instead of the vigorous and continuous readings of preceding years.

The walk commonly conducted us to some fashionable bonnet-shop; the reading, it is not to be denied, was sometimes tiresome, the contemplation of bonnets was always so. However, there is a variety, a considerable variety and diversity in the configuration of bonnets. When we descended into the region of caps, their sameness and insipidity I found intolerable. They appeared to me all alike, equally devoid of interest; I could not bring myself to care whether there were two or three more sprigs in the crown, or a little more or less lace on the edge. Besides, a cap was never quite right; it must be altered on the spot, taken

n, or let out; that could be done in a minute; the minute was a long one. And, uniformly, too much or too little had been effected by the change; it was to be altered again in another and a longer minute. I rebelled against this, so I was left outside the shop, like a wicked rebel, for one moment.

To loiter in the street on a cold day, for the indefinite and interminable period of one moment, was a punishment too severe even for rebellion and high treason, for treason against a high-crowned cap. So the walking, as well as the reading, came to an end.

When I called on Bysshe, Harriet was often absent; she had gone out with Eliza—gone to her father's. Bysshe himself was sometimes in London, and sometimes at Bracknell, where he spent a good deal of his time in visiting certain friends, with whom, at that period, he was in very close alliance, and upon terms of the greatest intimacy, and by which connection his subsequent conduct, I think, was much influenced.

In the spring of the year 1814 I changed the scene of my professional avocations and legal education from the Temple to Gray's Inn; to a sufficiently uninviting locality commanding a full view of Gray's Inn Lane. I had already passed one year with a conveyancer at York, and two years in the Temple at the chambers of a special pleader under the bar. I was now about to employ a fourth year with a barrister of considerable standing and eminence, who had much pleading business, but of a laborious, rather than of a lucrative description. It was said of him with a certain forensic facetiousness, that he had all the bones to pick. Cases of difficulty and intricacy were placed almost exclusively in his hands.

My position, therefore, with him was esteemed an enviable one, as being highly instructive, and so no doubt it was, so far as matters of that kind can afford any instruction. He had, moreover, the distinguished honour and happiness to be what is familiarly called the devil of the Attorney-General, and consequently we had an abundant, never-failing supply of tiresome indictments, interminable criminal informations, and other wearisome Crown business.

He had four pupils. Of these the first was a younger son of a high judicial functionary: he fully confiding in his father's opportunities and inclination to job him at the commencement of professional life into lucrative offices, that were properly designed to afford consolation to persons of merit at the otherwise unrequited conclusion of it; relying entirely upon the

wonted sordid and shameless rapacity, the necessary result of over-payment, never once saw the interior of his instructor's dingy chambers, and indeed they were not inviting.

The second pupil came once to chambers, to get out of the way of his father, who had come up from Bath with the avowed purpose of ear-wiggling his son for some indiscretion; and the young gentleman judged, that wherever else his father might seek him, he would never look for him at chambers: and he judged rightly.

The third attended pretty regularly, but he never chose to draw anything; he employed himself diligently in copying all the precedents of indictments that he could lay his hands upon, and they were many; of these he made a considerable collection. He was a baronet, and a man of good landed estate: what advantage he expected to derive from his MS. indictments, I could never learn or even conjecture.

Consequently, whatever drawing was to be done fell entirely upon the fourth pupil, and the amount was by no means trifling. My mornings were fully occupied in covering quire after quire of draught-paper with endless repetitions and fatiguing tautology. The whole duty was laid upon the willing horse, and he was worked hard, but not to death.

My ancient and laudable master, who wore the aspect of an immemorial usage incarnate in the flesh, or rather vested in skin and bones, shaken together incessantly by a choking, husky cough, which was older and more inveterate than the period of legal memory, was detained all day in the courts at Westminster. He had more to attend to there than he could possibly have coughed through, slowly after his wont, during the full end and term of two thousand years, if it had been devoted solely to clearing off arrears, without a single new entry. It was only in the evening that he could do duty at chambers; accordingly, we were employed together in going over what I had committed to paper during the morning, whilst he was shaking the arsenal, fulminating over Westminster Hall, and struggling to choke himself, without being absolutely suffocated, by his chronic spasmodic bursts of eloquence.

I was kept, therefore, almost every evening at chambers, often until a late hour, in settling our ponderous, voluminous masses of nonsensical jargon. The occupation was the more tedious, because my husky old Trebonian was dark through excess of brightness; his mastery of law was so complete, that his certain science had become doubt, and he knew so much that he knew



nothing, like those who most truly know. In the midst of our elaborate settling, some doubt would present itself. He stated it modestly, and began on the instant to take down his books, one after another; to find authorities, to lay the open volumes upon the tables and chairs, and often upon the floor around us. When he had collected matter enough for a month's hard reading, he looked at the accumulated references in despair.

'Well! Well! Time presses; I am afraid we must proceed. We must leave it as it is; they will lose the term else. We will clear up the doubt another time.'

We went on pretty smoothly for a while, the chronic cough permitting; but presently another doubt arose.

'Stay, stay; stop a moment!'

Another set of books was taken down, opened and laid in a second, and not less formidable tier upon the former, until he had satisfied himself that the second Gordian knot was as insoluble as the first; and the solution of this was postponed likewise.

'Let us go on; the defendants are in a hurry, they want their plea; we must try it for once as it is. We will clear up the matter another time.'

When the nightly sittings terminated, we were literally hemmed in on all sides with books, lying one upon another, and to be put back into their shelves unread by the old clerk next morning, in order to clear a passage to the next evening's seat of doubt.

O most egregious of black-letter judges, you have been sitting for some years now by the side of Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Æacus, have you made an appointment yet? Have you at last fixed that other time, Old Boy, when all the matters which we left undecided are to be cleared up; when all those points of pleading, questions, and doubts, are to be decided and set at rest?

Such were the Diversions, not of Purley or of Long Acre, but of Holborn Court, Gray's Inn! They interfered sadly with my attendance in our select circles and elegant society; however, it was very instructive.

My irksome duties were all the more irksome, inasmuch as no printed book of precedents, no printed forms, were admitted within the dingy walls of the dark chambers; all was in manuscript. The most perplexed and complicated transactions, upon due examination, often resolved themselves into the common forms of pleading, and these were to be painfully written out, as

well as the most special matters. It was doubtless the true course to keep the lovely, beneficent science of special pleading in its pristine and perfect purity, but it was not the way to make money.

My frequent breach of engagements of pleasure, and my inevitable absences from our favourite and accustomed places of resort, gave great umbrage to Bysshe, who blamed my devotion to pursuits abhorrent to the Muses and Graces.

He inveighed in no measured terms against my self-sacrifice, my base preference of a dim peep through a blackened, uncleaned window at Gray's Inn Lane, to the full view of the glories of nature and art, which we might have enjoyed together. 'I am fully convinced, as far as human experience extends, and it extends a great way in every direction, both in time and in space, that lawyers, not priests, are true enemies of knowledge. Learned, meaning thereby most ignorant, is the designation, which they have adopted, and freely bestow upon each other: a learned friend, a learned brother, a learned judge, the learned gentleman. To be learned in the law, means to be unlearned and deeply ignorant of everything besides; learned only in the law; learned precisely as a mule, or a bullock, is learned; stubborn, stupid, and intractable.' The poor fellow seemed to prove by his bitterness, that he had already, in the slang of certain metaphysicians, a pure, anticipated, precognition of the favours and benefits, which he was destined ere long to receive at the hands of lawyers. But of this hereafter. Moreover, I have been told that Shelley had met with some unfavourable specimens in his own neighbourhood, hence he conceived so early in life an intense and abiding dislike of lawyers.

If I saw less of my incomparable friend during my bondage in Holborn Court, if we met less frequently than both of us eagerly desired, our pleasure was all the more vivid, when, triumphing over untoward circumstances and overcoming difficulties, we were able occasionally to come together.

It became necessary to perform some surgical operation on Ianthe, the excision of a tumour, I believe. The operation was successfully performed; the able surgeon who operated told me he expected that the young mother would leave the room; he hinted, and finally suggested that she ought to go away, saying plainly that it would be too painful for her to witness it. But no; she thought proper to remain, and the business proceeded. She stood by her infant, narrowly observing all that was done, and to the astonishment of the operator, and of all who were present,

never betrayed, from first to last, any—the smallest signs of—emotion. In the whole course of his experience he declared he never met with such another female; she could have no feeling whatever. And he further remarked that a person who was able to discourse so calmly, so apathetically of suicide, could not possibly feel under any circumstances, either for herself or for others.

Whether his conclusions were correct I will not presume to affirm or to deny; I simply state the observations which he made to me, and which had been elicited by this singular manifestation of fortitude, of passive fortitude, or of Spartan insensibility.

In the spring of the year 1814 Shelley spent much of his time, as has been already related, at Bracknell; coming occasionally to London, and going continually backwards and forwards.

The following elegant epistle, conceived and penned somewhat in the French taste, will throw light upon his proceedings there, and show the nature of his existence, amidst the fumes of a slightly sickly sentimentality:

BRACKNELL, *March 11, 1814.*

Your most agreeable and welcome letter is a bribe, which will hardly let me tell you how much I was startled at the assertion to which I owe it. I cannot, now I am sober, confirm what you say I maintained the other night, 'that, to follow our inclinations *on all occasions* is the first and great commandment'. Look round, and you will see that I could not mean this; at least, as a general rule. And here is a new proof, which I wanted not, that from the warmth of argument never springs, or can spring, anything but misstatement and misconception. If I should grant anything like what you say, I must load it with such limitations, exceptions, and explanations, as will amount to a lawyer's interpretation, and that you will not thank me for. Perhaps the following precept of Champfort, taken in its best sense, will satisfy you, and certainly comes much nearer to my meaning: 'Jouis et fais jouir sans faire de mal à personne; voilà toute la morale'. This I have always maintained against a dear and ingenious sophist, who labours hard to persuade us, that in concerns of the heart, 's'abstenir c'est jouir'; and that it is wisdom to shut it against every feeling that can possibly bring with it any pain; as if everything worth having must not be purchased at this price, which (to use the words of an arch friend of mine) 'God in his infinite mischief' has been pleased to

set on every pleasure he grants to us, his poor suffering children, whom in his love he chasteneth.

When I have been delighted by the beauty and fragrance of the rose, I have sometimes doubted whether we could strip it of its thorns without injuring its beauty; and certainly I have never doubted whether it would be wise to renounce such beauty and fragrance because of the thorns that guard it. Alas! yes! Joys can and do pass away, and we must lament over them for ever; but that which does not pass away is the susceptibility of pure joys; which, with a lavish hand, nature scatters everywhere around her favoured children, to whom she gives, to make amends for all their sorrows, the power of going out of themselves for pleasure. A loving soul bears about within itself a living spring of affections, which keeps it fresh in spite of blights from evil things and evil men, and suffers no good feeling to wither and to die.

I will not have you despise homespun pleasures. Shelley is making a trial of them with us, and likes them so well that he is resolved to leave off rambling, and to begin a course of them himself. Seriously, I think his mind and body want rest. His journeys after what he has never found, have racked his purse and his tranquillity. He is resolved to take a little care of the former in pity to the latter, which I applaud, and shall second with all my might. He has deeply interested us. In the course of your intimacy he must have made you feel what we now feel for him. He is seeking a house close to us; and, if he succeeds, we shall have an additional motive to induce you to come among us in the summer.

If old Salomon had not his bewitching musical talent, his lively feeling, to which, by the by, he owes it, would seize upon our affections, and hold them fast. Certain strains sung by my sister make me so melancholy I cannot bear them; and, if anything could make me a convert to his iron philosophy, it would be to hear her sing, and to think that she has never been happy. I hear at this distance the heartrending complaint of Ariadne, and feel that the world is a desert. With such a feeling as this *Mademoiselle de l'Espinasse* is closely connected. Her sufferings, often so forcibly and naturally expressed, interest me deeply. Read the long letter to the contemptible object of her unhappy passion, soon after his marriage, containing her character of him, and pity the woman, whose understanding so plainly saw his unworthiness, and yet was so impotent in the struggle with her passion. This speedy answer to your letter says

plainly, that whenever you feel inclined to favour me with a letter, it will be right for you to follow your inclination, which must be productive of great pleasure to me. My sister never writes; scold her for me, if you can. At all times I can ill bear her silence, and less well now than ever, when I suspect it proceeds from low spirits. Thirty miles cannot separate me from my friends. That is not the worst evil of absence, for those we love we bear about in our hearts; but the groundless apprehensions which spring up to alarm us, when we might be tranquil, are very hard to bear. Next month we shall come to town to pass some weeks, when I hope we shall see you often. Shelley will write to you the first day he is in the humour for writing; in the meantime he unites with every member of this family in kind regards, to which I can only add the assurance of my cordial and friendly attachment.

HARRIET B.

Excuse a thousand blunders and much confusion of expression, for I write talking occasionally to Shelley of twenty different subjects.

To T. J. H.

BRACKNELL, *March 16, 1814.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I promised to write to you when I was in the humour. Our intercourse has been too much interrupted for my consolation. My spirits have not sufficed to induce the exertion of determining to write to you. My value, my affection for you have sustained no diminution; but I am a feeble, wavering, feverish being, who requires support and consolation, which his energies are too exhausted to return.

I have been staying with Mrs. B. for the last month; I have escaped, in the society of all that philosophy and friendship combine, from the dismaying solitude of myself. They have revived in my heart the expiring flame of life. I have felt myself translated to a paradise, which has nothing of mortality but its transitoriness; my heart sickens at the view of that necessity, which will quickly divide me from the delightful tranquillity of this happy home—for it has become my home. The trees, the bridge, the minutest objects, have already a place in my affections.

My friend, you are happier than I. You have the pleasures as well as the pains of sensibility. I have sunk into a premature old age of exhaustion, which renders me dead to everything,

but the unenviable capacity of indulging the vanity of hope, and a terrible susceptibility to objects of disgust and hatred.

My temporal concerns are slowly rectifying themselves; I am astonished at my own indifference to their event. I live here like the insect that sports in a transient sunbeam, which the next cloud shall obscure for ever. I am much changed from what I was. I look with regret to our happy evenings at Oxford, and with wonder at the hopes which in the excess of my madness I there encouraged. Burns says, you know,

Pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flower—the bloom is fled;  
Or like the snow-falls in the river,  
A moment white—then lost for ever.

Eliza is still with us—not here!—but will be with me when the infinite malice of destiny forces me to depart. I am now but little inclined to contest this point. I certainly hate her with all my heart and soul. It is a sight which awakens an inexpressible sensation of disgust and horror, to see her caress my poor little Ianthe, in whom I may hereafter find the consolation of sympathy. I sometimes feel faint with the fatigue of checking the overflowings of my unbounded abhorrence for this miserable wretch. But she is no more than a blind and loathsome worm, that cannot see to sting.

I have begun to learn Italian again. I am reading *Beccaria dei delitti e pene*. His essay seems to contain some excellent remarks, though I do not think that it deserves the reputation it has gained. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.

What have you written? I have been unable even to write a common letter. I have forced myself to read Beccaria and Dumont's *Bentham*. I have sometimes forgotten that I am not an inmate of this delightful home—that a time will come which will cast me again into the boundless ocean of abhorred society.

I have written nothing but one stanza, which has no meaning, and that I have only written in thought:

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast;  
Thy gentle words stir poison there;  
Thou hast disturbed the only rest  
That was the portion of despair!  
Subdued to Duty's hard control,  
I could have borne my wayward lot:  
The chains that bind this ruined soul  
Had cankered then—but crushed it not.

This is the vision of a delirious and distempered dream, which passes away at the cold clear light of morning. Its surpassing excellence and exquisite perfections have no more reality than the colour of an autumnal sunset. Adieu!

Believe me truly and affectionately yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

I hear that you often see the N.'s. Present my kindest regards to Mrs. N.; remember me also to her husband, who, you know, has quarrelled with me, although I have not consented to quarrel with him.

To T. J. H.

In this most touching melancholy letter only did Shelley ever mention to me the children of his first marriage; and here he speaks of Ianthe merely incidentally, and rather to show his dislike for another, than his love of her. I never heard any explanation of the cause of the intense aversion to which he gives utterance in such bitter terms. Every allowance and deduction being made for the fervour and fire of his poetic temperament, and for his sensitive, impressible, imaginative nature, his strong language will still seem far too strong. His violent antipathy was probably not less unreasonable than his former excess of deference and blind compliance and concessions towards a person, whose counsels and direction could never have been prudent, safe, or judicious.

Bysshe was completely fascinated with his paradise in Berkshire, of which an eye-witness will presently attempt to give a sketch. He always called the presiding divinity 'Meimouné'. Why he gave her this name I could never learn. She did not resemble the heroine of the Oriental tale in appearance, conduct, or opinions. A lady, who was an inmate of an eastern harem, would be little versed in French sentimentality; certainly Meimouné never read Wieland's *Agathon* in the French translation or in the German original; and never held or taught, that love, to be true, genuine, and no counterfeit, of which beware, must be purely a sentiment, neither more nor less.

## CHAPTER XXX

It was the spring circuit, the absence of my Common Law mentor on the northern circuit gave me some short respite of leisure; the dark chambers were shut up; but that my legal mind might not perish of inanition, lacking wholesome intellectual food, he kindly lent me as a special favour for my necessary sustenance, whilst he was away, a thick folio volume of his MS. Precedents. I patiently transcribed the most tempting of these in the morning at my lodgings. I was finishing the task of the day and about to go forth to dinner, when transcription and dinner were suddenly put an end to by a strange and unexpected apparition. A friend entered the room in a state of extreme agitation.

‘What is the matter?’

‘You must proceed to Bracknell instantly.’

‘But why?’

‘You must go instantly!’

‘Instantly, I have not dined.’

‘It is of no consequence.’

It was of no consequence whatever to him certainly, and of but little to myself. ‘To-day, it is late; will it not be better to go to-morrow morning? Will not that do as well?’

‘No! You must go at once; to-day, instantly, or you will not get a conveyance.’

To set out so abruptly, on so short a notice, was rather inconvenient; however, the distance was trifling, the journey not formidable, and I should find Bysshe there, and my friend’s anxiety would not brook a refusal or even a brief delay.

‘You need not take anything with you; you will find all you can want there.’

He seized my arm and marched me off to some coach-office in the city. I gathered from my uneasy companion on our way, that his lady was at Bracknell, staying with the same family as Shelley; that she had lately gone thither, and had been taken very ill; so ill that she would not say how ill she was. She asserted indeed that she was not at all ill, which was the more alarming. Her letters were most unsatisfactory. ‘So you must



go and see how she is, and return and report to me the condition in which you find her.' The mission was a delicate and embarrassing one, far more unpleasant than the sudden journey. 'I am no judge of the illness of a lady, nor indeed of any one. I do not understand such matters. She may be ill, and not like to tell me what is the nature of her complaint; if she tells me I shall not half comprehend her. If it be a serious illness she will be in bed, and then, of course, I shall not be allowed to see her. Send some medical man!'

I named two or three. 'Any one of these will go; will go as a friend, if you wish it.'

'I have no confidence in any of them, but much in you; none in anybody else. You must go; I cannot go myself; I dare not leave my children.'

He urged his suit with such a passionate, pitiable earnestness and mournful vehemence that it was impossible to refuse.

'You will get there in good time, it is only thirty miles; they will give you dinner, you need be in no apprehension about that. Stay there a whole day, stay over to-morrow. They will be charmed to have you with them. See as much of my poor wife as you can; be as much with her as possible; and then come back the next day, dine with me at six, and tell me what you think of things.'

For this slight service, which he esteemed so important, his gratitude would be eternal and would know no bounds. Submission was inevitable. I was placed on the top of a heavy coach, which went as far as Englefield Green, and would leave me there. It was close to Bracknell; anybody would tell me the way; I should be there in a moment. It was a heavy coach indeed, and a wondrous slow one; we tarried in Piccadilly so long that it seemed as if the prescribed period of absence was to be spent at the White Horse Cellar. But it was not so, however; we stopped at every pothouse on the road, so that it was quite dark when we reached at last our ultimate destination. It had been a tedious journey, but we had accomplished it at last. So now for Bracknell; it is close at hand; I shall be there in a moment; so now for Bracknell and dinner!

I inquired the way.

'Have you never been there before?'

'Never.'

'Then you will not be able to find the way; you must have somebody to go with you. The ostler will go, but he must have five shillings for his trouble.'

'Five shillings! It is close at hand.'

'It is six long miles off and more.'

I thought the fellow augmented the distance in order to augment his pay. However it was a trifle; the man shall have his money; and in truth I began to suspect that in reality Bracknell was not quite so close at hand as my anxious, uxorious friend in his eagerness to dispatch me had supposed or asserted.

'Are you ready, sir? It is rather a long step, but I will take you the shortest way! Anyhow it is a long six miles! Where is your luggage?'

'I have none.' I could see by the light of the stable lantern that the good man was disappointed. It would have been more respectable, more satisfactory to himself, more in accordance with strict professional etiquette, more comfortable, to have carried a huge trunk on his shoulder all the way, than to walk empty-handed with a passenger, who had no luggage. Notwithstanding his disappointment, we set out together; it was a dark night, dark as pitch; I never was out in a darker night; the sky was overcast; no traces of sun, or moon, not a star was to be seen. I could not discern any object; I could not see my guide. I followed, as well as I could, the sound of his footsteps, to catch which I listened with painful attention; and when from the nature of the ground they were inaudible, I spoke to him, that the sound of his voice might lead me. I could only advance slowly therefore, and timidly, for I did not know where I might plunge the next step. The distance seemed infinite; sixty times six miles and more. We are on Ascot Heath, he informed me more than once. I have never seen that celebrated spot. I have never set foot on it before or since. It might have been Christchurch Meadows, Salisbury Plain, the racecourse at York, Doncaster, or Epsom, or the Steppes of Tartary, for anything that I could discover. A gay, noisy, busy, crowded scene, swarming with life, and brilliant with fashion; such was my idea of Ascot Heath, how different did I find the reality from what I imagined, in this and other passages through life. It was a land of darkness, of thick, black darkness, of solitude, stillness, and silence. We met no one, heard no greeting, no voice, no sound; we saw no light, until at last we came to a few scattered lights, and to Bracknell. It was my fortune to visit another place of pleasure of even greater celebrity some ten or twelve years afterwards, in the midst of darkness not less intense. I would gladly have seen something of the locality of Capua, renowned even to a proverb; I passed through that city twice

with the courier, but on both occasions in the middle of winter and in the middle of the night. It was covered with the same impenetrable veil of thick darkness, which hung over Ascot Heath, but it did not lie hushed in the like silence. I heard a mighty noise in my guarded progress through the vast and impregnable fortress; the raising and lowering of drawbridges; the opening and shutting of gates; the loud, vociferous, and unceasing challenges of the sentinels, and the clattering of the hoofs of our strong escort of light horsemen; for in 1825 robberies were rife, the banditti were going ahead in the south of Italy.

A few scattered lights cheered me; I was at Bracknell. We found the house without difficulty; the ostler had well earned his five shillings, he received his money cheerfully and civilly. Our approach was noiseless; a neat handmaiden opened the door, and passed me without a word into the sitting-room. If the ghost of Samuel had found his way from Endor, and walking across Ascot Heath, without luggage, had stood before them, the ladies, for all present were ladies, could not have been more amazed. Bysshe was not there; he was absent in London. This was too bad. Who coming on purpose to see him, and by express appointment, could ever expect to find him? But my visit was unlooked for; he had no right to go away; it was not fair! I had breakfasted at eight and slightly, for I was to write all the morning, and to dine, as I supposed, betimes; I had not taken food all day, and it was now late, ten o'clock, or more. Dinner was not to be named: so gross a piece of sensuality was not to be thought of; at least, at that hour. But there was tea, excellent tea; tea in large cups, and in abundance, and thick bread and butter. There were three charming ladies waiting upon me, like ministering angels, and much charming conversation; what was wanting, then, to make it a perfect paradise? Nothing, surely; heavenly harpings would only have been an interruption!

We sat up frightfully late; they severally expounded the scriptures of life and love and elegance; and my heart burnt within me. It really seemed that, after Bysshe his fashion, and like the shepherds of the East, we were to watch all night.

Why we parted; how we got to bed; why the party ever broke up, and are not sitting together in Bracknell at this hour, is a mystery which I could never unravel. Nevertheless, I found myself, somehow or other, in Bysshe's bedroom. His clothes were scattered about; there was much to remind me of him,

although I could never forget him; in particular, there were books on all sides; wherever a book could be laid, was an opened book, turned down on its face to keep his place. It is sweet to sit up late; but it is not sweet to rise late. It was fully eleven o'clock before I was allowed to set my longing eyes on tea and bread and butter for the second time. I had risen in pretty good time, and I tried to still my hunger by dipping into such books as were lying about the room; they were chiefly French.

I did not perceive that much was the matter with the interesting invalid, nor did she profess to be seriously indisposed. In the course of the day a walk was proposed to me. It was my first visit to Bracknell; I ought to see something of the neighbourhood, it was pleasant. I assented: the invalid would attend me; she would show me High Elms, where Shelley had resided, and much besides.

Upon this offer a veto was authoritatively put on the instant. The whole constitution was so terribly shattered, the nerves were in such a debilitated state, that to go out of doors would be an act of madness, of suicide. The inhibition was submitted to with an ill grace; if the sympathy engendered by imputed sickness was agreeable, the restraints which it brought with it were not so. There was a youth with us, who had been educated abroad, in France; he was extremely polite, and sadly to seek; the common result of such an education. He alone was to accompany me, the third party being under injunction to stay at home.

'Never mind,' said the fair sufferer, somewhat contumaciously, as we sallied forth, 'I shall soon return to London, and then we will have a good long walk together in Kensington Gardens.'

On the hill opposite Bracknell is a village, called Hamstead, or Hampstead; we walked thither. It was pleasant enough, but the Berkshire Hampstead is infinitely inferior to the Hampstead of Middlesex. We called at the house of a spinster of stout maturity; she welcomed us cordially, and began presently to discourse vigorously concerning the rights of women. The Frenchman stared, and I was silent; in truth, her flowing and rapid delivery did not allow answer, or interpellation. My juvenile companion pointed out Shelley's house. 'Mr. Shelley is a man of splendid talents and overwhelming eloquence, but he is very eccentric; a most extraordinary being!' He told me several anecdotes, which in themselves and from his mode of relating them were whimsical enough. One in particular, illustrative of the mania for navigation, was characteristic. At

the bottom of the garden at Bracknell was a ditch, or rivulet, flowing into the Loddon, a tributary stream of the Thames. Pope's Pastoral has made the Loddon, under the name Lodona, a classical stream; the tributary's tributary, the nameless ditch, was not deemed unworthy of the notice of a divine poet. Bysshe went to sea upon it stealthily in one of the washing-tubs of his amiable hostess, rowing or punting his frail bark with a stick used in washing, until the bottom came out. He then freely took possession of another vessel, until the whole fleet of tubs had suffered shipwreck. When the great and terrible day of washing arrived, when every tub was required to give an account of itself, they had all vanished, and as the too fearless navigator had vanished likewise, it was some time before they discovered what had become of them. And Calypso and her attendant nymphs sighed in vain for a clean shift. The purple vintage of the grape has its own peculiar results, and so has the white vintage of the wash.

At some hour of the day we had dinner; but it was not much; it was irregular, unpunctual, uncomfortable, inconclusive, according to the ordinary course of proceedings in such matters, which were slightly regarded by this family. In the evening there was the same gallant tea-drinking as before. After a plain, scanty, homely, almost uneatable dinner, good, strong, excellent tea in large breakfast-cups, without stint or limit, restored the balance of power, of trade, and of the constitution. The ladies were never weary of the sweet courtesies of making tea, and of handing it about to us graciously and gracefully; and there was thick bread and butter in abundance, in well-filled, well-piled horns of plenty, and thereby chiefly was life sustained. Here extremes met; the simple fare of the poorest old woman, of the starved labourer and his children, through a stern, iron necessity, was the diet, through free will and deliberate choice, of the most refined, elegant, accomplished, intellectual specimens of humanity; of humanity nearly approaching to divinity. A young lady never looks so like an angel, I observed to Bysshe, as when she is handing one a large cup of good strong tea.

'Oh! you wretch,' he exclaimed; 'what a horridly sensual idea!'

A lovely young creature gave him cup after cup. He was greedily swallowing the nectar, discussing and disputing the while, and trembling with emotion; and pouring the precious liquor into his bosom, upon his knees, and into his shoes, and spilling it on the carpet. She stood before him; and, when he

had emptied his cup, she gently wiped him with a white cambric handkerchief.

'Was I so far wrong, then?' I asked him in a whisper. For once the philosopher was impatient of the truth, and returned no answer.

In the palace of the daughter of the Sun, Circe; in the cave of Calypso, the Calypso of Telemachus, not of Ulysses; where, to clasp the hands in agony, to sigh profoundly, and to turn up the eyes in passionate anguish, was bliss, after the ordinances of the French school of sentiment, by which Shelley was at that period somewhat caught, his presence seemed indispensable. We greatly needed Bysshe that evening. We sat up late again, had no beauty-sleep; excessively late—half the night. The penalty paid for the indulgence was, rising fearfully late in the morning, or rather daytime, and waiting one's patience out of joint for breakfast. Such was the delights of Shelley's paradise in Bracknell.

The prescribed period of my visit of inspection had expired; my mission was fulfilled; it was incumbent upon me to return and make my report. Monsieur very obligingly conducted me by a pleasant walk upon the road from Bagshot to London. A coach soon came by, and he politely bowed me up to the roof. I arrived at the house of my friend in time for dinner. I found him calm and contented, and my report was satisfactory—and so was a good dinner. I had been fed plentifully on sighs and smiles; these stay the stomach, but do not fill it; and after feeding for two days on angels' food, on the celestial manna of refined sentiment, a good dinner, through the force of contrast, had more than usual attraction. It may be true, notwithstanding, as an abstract proposition, that dinner, to be quite pure, ought to be purely a sentiment: if we sit down to table at all, we should sit down, not to eat and drink, but to weep.

Wieland's *Agathon* was the leading classic, the textbook, in that university; the work in which all who would graduate were to be examined, which it was necessary to master in order to obtain a degree, which all who ventured to contend for a prize must take up. *Agathon* was read, not in the original, for the German language was not cultivated or understood by the professors, but as *Histoire d'Agathon*, in the French translation of Citizen Pernay. It is in three volumes only, not in four, and contains about three-quarters of the original work. The translator says, in his preface: 'Nous avons suivi l'original aussi près que possible; mais nous nous sommes permis d'abrégé

quelques chapitres, et de supprimer des longueurs: peut-être M. Wieland aurait-il agi de même, s'il avait écrit pour des Français. Le goût de la nation allemande est si différent du nôtre, qu'il est possible qu'on nous reproche encore d'avoir conservé des passages, que nous n'avons pas eu le courage de faire disparaître'. This book was immediately put into the hands of a neophyte. Shelley devoured it eagerly; he was fascinated with it, indeed. I read it with pleasure in the French version, for it was the first time I had met with it. I have read it twice, at least, with augmented gratification, long afterwards, in the original language. I know not whether it has ever been rendered into English; I never met with an English translation. In omitting the 'longueurs', the citizen translator has left out the most valuable portions. I ventured to remark to my charming preceptresses, when they taught on the authority of this work, as well as on their own, that love should be purely a sentiment; that this admirable doctrine was not inculcated throughout the whole of the history. At the commencement, certainly, *Agathon* was rather fast. They answered that the opening chapters of his tale did Wieland no credit; it would have been far better, on every account, if he had omitted them. The reader ought to attend to the latter books only, and entirely to disregard the commencement. This may be sage advice, no doubt, but it is not easy for a young man always to bear it in mind, and duly and discreetly to attend to it. Besides, the conclusion of the classical romance would hardly be intelligible to one who had not read the earlier adventures.

The glowing young Platonic poet embraced the elegant and learned fiction with ardour, and accepted it with entire faith, as the testament of Platonic love.

BRACKNELL, *April* 18, 1814.

Do you forgive my silence, for I cannot forgive myself, and yet it has been quite impossible to write. My mind has not been free one hour since you were here; and even now I only send a few words to say that you must wait for an answer to your letter till I come to town, when I shall have the pleasure of telling you how entirely and unavoidably I have been engaged.

Mrs. N. is wonderfully recovered. Air and exercise, and friendly conversation, are just restoring her good looks. Shelley is again a widower; his beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton.

All here unite in kind remembrance; and I entreat you to excuse this abrupt and hasty scrawl, which does not satisfy my conscience or inclination, but which is all I can command time for to-day. I will let you know when we arrive in town; in the meanwhile, I am, very sincerely yours,

HARRIET B.

To T. J. H.

A criminal information against Lord Cochrane and three other persons of less note, for what was familiarly called the Stock Exchange Hoax, was the most remarkable of sundry exploits in special pleading that were achieved in our murky den at Gray's Inn. It was performed under the auspices of the Solicitor-General of the day, a deaf man, as deaf as a post, but by no means inconsiderable for legal attainments, and not ungentlemanlike. He evinced extraordinary zeal in the matter. The prosecution was conducted through purely political motives, in order to get rid of a troublesome Member of Parliament—a bold, uncompromising reformer; and under an exaggerated notion of the effects of a conviction for a conspiracy, some antiquated crotchets about the villainous judgment, which it was imagined, might be pronounced against the defendants; and that the spurs, so hardly won by the gallant and patriotic officer, might be hacked off with a cleaver, so that he would thereby be for ever incapacitated from sitting in the House of Commons. A conviction and a severe sentence were obtained; but in other respects, the prosecution, like all other political persecutions, failed in its principal object. The victim was accounted a martyr for the popular cause; the people, whom he served, stood by him firmly, and a penny subscription paid the fine imposed upon him; and he was a greater favourite with the mob than he had ever been before he was attacked by the Government. However, we performed our part well; the genius of special pleading triumphed over all technical and other difficulties. We did the trick: right or wrong, we did the trick! The defendants could not escape from the net which we spread for them, and in the event threw over them. It was not in vain, that this right hand wrote a thousand times: 'The said Charles Random de Berenger, the said John Cawthorne Butt, the said Alexander Cochrane Johnson, and the said Alexander Cochrane, commonly called Lord Cochrane, being such evil disposed persons, as aforesaid'. My industrious fellow-pupil declared, if the information had been an indictment, he would certainly have copied it.



It was well for him that it was not; he had a fortunate escape. He said that we were bound to go into court to hear the event of my voluminous draft; and, accordingly, on the day of the trial we walked to the city together, and entered the crowded court.

Lord Ellenborough had come to Guildhall to get a verdict at all hazards. He was rolling about on the bench like a stormy sea, that seemed somehow to desire to calm itself. His head was tossed up and down as a cockboat in the surf; like the white buoy on the bar amidst the breakers. He was clumsily courteous to the jury, to the defendants, to everybody; roughly bland in an awkward fashion, like a pet bear, and freely rejecting immaterial evidence with conspicuous impartiality. The appearance of the defendants certainly was not prepossessing. The three first-named seemed to be at home, but the noble and gallant admiral was ill at ease; it was quite plain that he did not like to be thus aground, stranded, but heartily wished himself afloat again. As regards Lord Cochrane, at least, it was not a creditable proceeding, I confess, although I drew the information myself; but to discuss the matter here would be inopportune, even if its interest had not long since passed away. On the level floor of the old court of King's Bench it was impossible to hear, or to see, with advantage. The old courts at Guildhall were disgraceful to the administration of justice and to the city of London. To eat and drink and job away their funds, not to erect suitable buildings for public purposes, was in those days esteemed the paramount, the sole duty of a municipal corporation.

I stood in the court for an hour or two, amongst the crowd on the floor, and then withdrew; my fellow-pupil remained. I contrived to gather from the bench that I should leave the affair in very good hands; that my criminal information was pretty safe. In Cheapside I fell in with Shelley: I spoke to him of the trial that was depending. He rarely took an interest in such matters, and he expressed no curiosity as to the result. We walked westward, through Newgate Street. When we reached Skinner Street, he said: 'I must speak with Godwin; come in, I will not detain you long'.

I followed him through the shop, which was the only entrance, and upstairs. We entered a room on the first floor; it was shaped like a quadrant. In the arc were windows; in one radius a fireplace, and in the other a door, and shelves with many old books. William Godwin was not at home. Bysshe strode about the room, causing the crazy floor of the ill-built, unowned

dwelling-house to shake and tremble under his impatient footsteps. He appeared to be displeased at not finding the fountain of Political Justice. 'Where is Godwin?' he asked me several times, as if I knew. I did not know, and to say the truth, I did not care. He continued his uneasy promenade; and I stood reading the names of old English authors on the backs of the venerable volumes, when the door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called 'Shelley!' A thrilling voice answered 'Mary!' And he darted out of the room, like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king. A very young female, fair and fair-haired, pale indeed, and with a piercing look, wearing a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time, had called him out of the room. He was absent a very short time—a minute or two; and then returned. 'Godwin is out; there is no use in waiting.' So we continued our walk along Holborn.

'Who was that, pray?' I asked, 'a daughter?'

'Yes.'

'A daughter of William Godwin?'

'The daughter of Godwin and Mary.'

This was the first time, on the day of Lord Cochrane's trial, that I beheld a very distinguished lady, of whom I have much to say hereafter. It was but the glance of a moment, through a door partly opened. Her quietness certainly struck me, and possibly also, for I am not quite sure on this point, her paleness and piercing look. Nothing more was said on either side about the young female. 'Do you think he loved her?' First impressions are indelible; and in them alone are the truth and reality of things for the most part to be found. Truth lives at the bottom of a well; perhaps, rather, at the fountain head. It may be well, therefore, to trace my earliest impressions on this subject to their source. I spent five or six years of my boyhood at a public school in an old cathedral city. The young flock, of which I was a member, and eventually the captain, were styled by ourselves, and designated universally by others, 'The Grammar Boys'. In the German universities, all who are not students, youths, or otherwise matriculated in the university, are termed Philistines. For all other lads in the town, be they who they might, we had a still less courteous appellation; they were known to us only as 'The Blackguards'. Of their existence our fists might be accounted the final cause; they had been created solely that they might be licked by us, whenever an opportunity and a pretence offered; consequently, they had the

cretion to keep out of the way of the Grammar Boys as much as possible.

The ecclesiastical corporation was wealthy; one of the richest. There were bishops, and deans, and prebendaries, and archdeacons in plenty; but these, our court and trump cards, were only turned up occasionally. They came to the audits, and to be handsomely paid for feasting sumptuously, and entertaining hospitably during a residence of three weeks a-piece in every year; in a word, the grandees only came when something was to be gotten. The constant quantities were stars of a lesser magnitude; and they, like the poor, were always with us. Precentors, sacristans, librarians, minor canons, vicars choral, choristers, organists; in short, the whole staff of a cathedral of the first class, and many parochial clergy, who held livings in the city, or the neighbourhood, small benefices, and, for the most part, the options of the minor canons. The higher ecclesiastics were not deficient in hospitality and attention to those boys with whom they were acquainted, and a slight acquaintance sufficed; but their visits were few and far between, as the visits of angels.

The roast pigs, the roast geese, the roast hares; the loins of veal and hams; the overflowing dishes of green peas, asparagus, and new potatoes; the well-sugared, juicy, fruit-pies, with their attendant custards; plum-pudding with its brandy-sauce—according to the vicissitudes of the seasons—were set out on Sundays punctually at two o'clock on the boards of the poorer clergy, to cheer their famished families and friends: so copious and nutritious was the milk of the dun cow! How many a genial Sunday dinner did the hungry grammar boy share with these humble, apostolical men; to look back upon their simple, but succulent fare, through the long vista of half a century, is almost as satisfying as a full meal. Why, in God's name, and in the name of our holy religion, did they sacrilegiously plunder those venerable institutions, and suppress or diminish them, instead of restoring them to their pristine efficiency, by enforcing residence, exorcizing the demons of pluralities, jobbing, and nepotism.

In a cathedral the precentor is the genius of the place, the coryphæus of the choir. He appoints the musical services, chooses the anthem, and sings aloud the first verse of the Psalms as a quick chant in D minor, or a slow measure in any other key he may please to select; and it is worse than sacrilege to swerve half a tone from his irresponsible guidance. The mighty organ itself, with its ten thousand tongues, and infinitely varying

voices, dares to speak only as he bids it. A huge cauliflower wig, well whitened, surmounted by a portentous shovel hat, is a crown of glory to the aged, the spectacles being of a like majesty, vast pebbles in ponderous silver frames, glittering like the lamps of a carriage. An ample black coat, with large buttons, a lapelled waistcoat, black shorts, square-toed shoes, bright silver buckles on the instep and at the knee, and a gold-headed cane of a solid structure, are the proper accompaniments and consolations of our declining years. The externals of old age have been given up, and with them all due reverence. Nowadays an old man must needs dress himself like a boy, in order that he may look like an old fool, and be treated as one.

By the worthy pastor, who imprinted my name upon my forehead at the baptismal font, I was furnished with an introduction to the estimable precentor. I took the letter to his house. An old housekeeper, whose dress harmonized with the costume of her master, came to the door. She wore a flowered gown of chintz, radiant with colossal flowers of the brightest hues; such as I have subsequently seen Dutch matrons wearing in Holland. 'Master is not at home; but the girls are, they will be glad to see you. Pray walk in!' That was well. The precentor might have inquired after the supine of some Latin verb; or have required the *præteritum perfectum passivum* of a Greek baritone; with the girls there could be nothing worse than battledore and shuttlecock, more puzzling than hide and seek. The reverend leader of the choir had no son living, but he was blessed with three daughters. To them I was ushered in, to the tall, gaunt, bony, pale-eyed virgins of forty or fifty summers. The worthy housekeeper had known them ever since they were born, before indeed, and she persisted steadfastly in calling them 'the girls', in spite of Time himself. They were Blues and more, learned ladies; so learned, that it makes the head ache, even now, to think how learned they were.

'Take a seat. Could Homer write? Wolfius, in his *Prolegomena*, says he could not. What do you say, sir?'

'I do not know; but our vicar can, and here is his letter of introduction.'

It was a come off, but it would not do. The letter was laid unopened upon a desk. I must pass my examination. It seemed as if I was sitting for the gold medal, and had three examining masters upon me at once, so mercilessly did they pluck me. I heard then, for the first time, what I have often heard since, that Herodotus was the father of history; and I

heard much besides—some things, I believe, that I never heard before or since. I was invited to dine next Sunday. The recantor was a merry, good-natured old man, and without exception, the best and happiest punster I ever met with; and that was still better, he had made over, without any reservation, all his learning to his daughters.

To call in the course of the week, after dining on Sunday, was the rule. 'They are out, except the youngest of the girls, Miss Debby; you can go into her.' Miss Deborah was sitting by herself with a small volume in her hand; she laid it down open on the table. 'Did he love her? Do you think he loved her?' That was a poser! It was the stiffest question they ever put. When they confined themselves to the ancient world I could give some sort of a guess answer; but when they descended to modern literature, which they condescended to read, and it was a great condescension, I was quite lost. She put the book into my hand—Godwin's *Memoirs of Mary*; a work, which at that time was a novelty, at least in a provincial town. 'Of course, you have read this?' Of course, I had not. I had never even heard of William Godwin or Mary Wollstonecraft: how should I? She read several passages aloud to me, and concluded with the question: 'Did he love her? Do you think he loved her?'

I looked at her beseechingly, and would have said: 'Ask me anything you like about *τυπτω*. I am pretty strong in the verbs; and I can make you a Greek tree; but I am a novice in love!' She was moved by my supplicating looks, and so the kind creature let me go. When I saw, for the first time, the daughter of the little book, with whose birth it concludes; of the little book that had scared me so cruelly; how vividly did the sight of her recall my adventure with 'the girl' Deborah! 'I could not answer your question then, dearest Debby, being only in my thirteenth year; but I can now. If you meant to ask, as I have no doubt you did, whether there is any peculiar advantage in the new philosophy of love, I can assure you, confidently, my good girl, that there is none whatever.'

Let us take one more peep at Field Place; one more only, and it will be the last, for it was Bysshe's last visit to his paternal hearth and native home. In the beginning of the summer of 1814 he walked one day alone from Bracknell to Horsham. A long and a pleasant walk, I should imagine. He was in an excited state, and had revelations by the way, and saw celestial visions, of which more hereafter.

A young officer in a marching regiment had been quartered

some little time at Horsham; he met with hospitality and kindness, as others did, at Field Place. He assisted at the brief return of the prodigal son; he was present at the last visit, and he has given us a written account of it, from which I will extract such particulars as are interesting. It is strangely interlarded with laudations of his benefactors; such rapturous gratitude is creditable to his feelings; but in mercy to all persons concerned, it is expedient to omit his demonstrations of it. One may infer from the tune and temper of Bysshe's last letter to myself, that his family might have had him then on reasonable, on easy terms, had they known how to negotiate a treaty of peace. They might probably have lured the wild hawk, the peregrine falcon, back to his perch without difficulty. Possibly they did not know it; certainly they did not know how to set about it; and the young wanderer was reserved for other, and for higher and more important destinies: man proposes, but man seldom disposes. It is a strange and a sad picture of the fruits of stubborn, intractable, wrong-headed violence to contemplate his mother and sisters timidly entertaining for the last time the divine poet disguised as a soldier. The friendly reception of the young officer at Field Place is related, and the narrative proceeds thus:

'At this time I had not seen Shelley, but the servants, especially the old butler, Laker, had spoken of him to me. He seemed to have won the hearts of the whole household. Mrs. Shelley often spoke to me of her son; her heart yearned after him with all the fondness of a mother's love. It was during the absence of his father and the three youngest children, that the natural desire of a mother to see her son induced her to propose that he should pay her a short visit. At this time he resided somewhere in the country with his first wife and their only child, Ianthe. He walked from his house, until within a very few miles of Field Place, when a farmer gave him a seat in his travelling cart. As he passed along the farmer, ignorant of the quality of his companion, amused Bysshe with descriptions of the country and its inhabitants. When Field Place came in sight, he told whose seat it was; and as the most remarkable incident connected with the family, that young Master Shelley seldom went to church. The poor fellow arrived at Field Place exceedingly fatigued. I came there the following morning to meet him. I found him with his mother and his two elder sisters in a small room off the drawing-room, which they had named Confusion Hall. He received me with frankness and kindliness, as if he had known

ie from childhood, and at once won my heart. I fancy I see him now, as he sat by the window, and hear his voice, the tones of which impressed me with his sincerity and simplicity. His resemblance to his sister, Elizabeth, was as striking as if they had been twins. His eyes were most expressive, his complexion beautifully fair; his features exquisitely fine; his hair was dark, and no peculiar attention to its arrangement was manifest. In person he was slender and gentleman-like, but inclined to stoop; his gait was decidedly not military. The general appearance indicated great delicacy of constitution. One would at once pronounce of him that he was something different from other men. There was an earnestness in his manner, and such perfect gentleness of breeding and freedom from everything artificial as charmed every one. I never met a man who so immediately won upon me. The generosity of his disposition and utter unselfishness imposed upon him the necessity of strict self-denial in personal comforts. Consequently he was obliged to be most economical in his dress. He one day asked us how we liked his coat, the only one he had brought with him. We said it was very nice, it looked as if new. Well, said he, it is an old black coat, which I have had done up, and smartened with metal buttons and a velvet collar. As it was not desirable that Bysshe's presence in the country should be known, we arranged that on walking out he should wear my scarlet uniform, and that I should assume his outer garments. So he donned the soldier's dress, and sallied forth. His head was so remarkably small, that though mine be not large, the cap came down over his eyes, the peak resting on his nose, and it had to be stuffed before it would fit him. His hat just stuck on the crown of my head. He certainly looked like anything but a soldier.

'The metamorphosis was very amusing; he enjoyed it much, and made himself perfectly at home in his unwonted garb. We gave him the name of Captain Jones, under which name we used to talk of him after his departure; but, with all our care, Bysshe's visit could not be kept a secret. I chanced to mention the name of Sir James Mackintosh, of whom he expressed the highest admiration. He told me Sir James was intimate with one to whom, as he said, he owed everything; from whose book, *Political Justice*, he had derived all that was valuable in knowledge and virtue. He discoursed with eloquence and enthusiasm; but his views seemed to me exquisitely metaphysical, and by no means clear, precise, or decided. He told me he had already

read the Bible in Hebrew four times. He was then only twenty-two years of age. Shelley never learnt Hebrew; he probably said, in Greek, for he was much addicted to reading the Septuagint. He spoke of the Supreme Being as of infinite mercy and benevolence. He disclosed no fixed views of spiritual things; all seemed wild and fanciful. He said, that he once thought the surrounding atmosphere was peopled with the spirits of the departed. He reasoned and spoke as a perfect gentleman, and treated my arguments, boy as I was—I had lately completed my sixteenth year—with as much consideration and respect as if I had been his equal in ability and attainments. Shelley was one of the most sensitive of human beings; he had a horror of taking life, and looked upon it as a crime. He read poetry with great emphasis and solemnity: one evening, he read aloud to us a translation of one of Goethe's poems, and at this day I think I hear him. In music he seemed to delight, as a medium of association: the tunes which had been favourites in boyhood charmed him. There was one, which he played several times on the piano with one hand, that seemed to absorb him; it was an exceedingly simple air, which, I understand, his earliest love was wont to play for him. Poor fellow! He soon left us, and I never saw him afterwards, but I can never forget him. It was his last visit to Field Place. He was an amiable, gentle being.'

MY DEAR H.,

TORQUAY, *Feb. 16, 1857.*

It is very difficult, after so long a time, to remember with accuracy events which occurred so long ago. The first time I ever saw Bysshe was when I was at Harrow. I was nine years old; my brother George, ten. We took him up to Brentford, where he was at school, at Dr. Greenlaw's; a servant of my father's taking care of us all. He accompanied us to Ferne, and spent the Easter holidays there. The only circumstance I can recollect in connection with that visit was, that Bysshe, who was some few years older than we were, thought it would be good service to play carpenters, and, under his auspices, we got the carpenters' axes, and cut down some of my father's young fir-trees in the park. My father often used to remind me of that circumstance.

I did not meet Bysshe again after that till I was fifteen, the year I left the navy, and then I went to Field Place with my father, mother, Charlotte, and Harriet. Bysshe was there, having just left Eton, and his sister, Elizabeth. Bysshe was at that time more attached to my sister Harriet than I can express,



and I recollect well the moonlight walks we four had at Strode, and also at St. Irving's; that, I think, was the name of the place, then the Duke of Norfolk's, at Horsham. (St. Irving's Hills, a beautiful place, on the right-hand side as you go from Horsham to Field Place, laid out by the famous Capability Brown, and full of magnificent forest trees, waterfalls, and rustic seats. The house was Elizabethan. All has been destroyed.) That was in the year 1810. After our visit at Field Place, we went to my brother's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bysshe, his mother, and Elizabeth joined us, and a very happy month we spent. Bysshe was full of life and spirits, and very well pleased with his successful devotion to my sister. In the course of that summer, to the best of my recollection, after we had retired into Wiltshire, a continual correspondence was going on, as I believe, there had been before, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet. But she became uneasy at the tone of his letters on speculative subjects, at first consulting my mother, and subsequently my father also on the subject. This led at last, though I cannot exactly tell how, to the dissolution of an engagement between Bysshe and my sister, which had previously been permitted, both by his father and mine.

In the autumn of 1810 Bysshe went to Oxford, to reside at University College, where he became acquainted with Mr. Hogg, and formed an intimate friendship with him. He found in him a kindred spirit as to his studies and speculations on various subjects, and it was not long ere Bysshe began to write on these. During the Christmas vacation of that year, and in January 1811, I spent part of it with Bysshe at Field Place, and when we returned to London, his sister Mary sent a letter of introduction with a present to her schoolfellow, Miss Westbrook, which Bysshe and I were to take to her. I recollect we did so, calling at Mr. Westbrook's house. I scarcely know how it came about, but from that time Bysshe corresponded with Miss Westbrook. And not long after, for it was very soon after the Lent term had commenced, a little controversial work was published at Oxford. The pamphlet had not the author's name, but it was suspected in the university who was the author; and the young friends were dismissed from Oxford, for contumaciously refusing to deny themselves to be the authors of the work.

Bysshe and his friend then came to London, his father at that time refusing to receive Bysshe at Field Place. He came, therefore, to my brother's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I was then in town, attending Mr. Abernethy's anatomical lectures.

The thought of anatomy, especially after a few conversations with my brother, became quite delightful to Bysshe, and he attended a course with me, and sometimes went also to St. Bartholomew's Hospital. At that time Bysshe and his friend took a lodging in Poland Street, where they continued for some time; I think, a great part of the spring, and I spent a part of every day with them. No particular incident occurred at the time; at least I do not recollect any. They both, but especially Bysshe, were occupied all the mornings in writing; and after the anatomical lecture, we used sometimes to walk in St. James's Park, where Bysshe used to express his dislike of soldiers; objecting to a standing army, as being calculated to fetter the minds of the people.

In the course of the spring, when his father was attending Parliament, an effort was made by the Duke of Norfolk to persuade my cousin to become a politician, under his auspices. By the duke's invitation Bysshe met his father, at dinner at Norfolk House, to talk over a plan for bringing him in as member for Horsham, and to induce him to exercise his talents in the pursuit of politics. I recollect the indignation Bysshe expressed after that dinner, at what he considered an effort made to shackle his mind, and introduce him into life as a mere follower of the duke. His father was puzzled what to do when that plan failed.

In the meantime, my brother Thomas and his first wife, a very nice person, came to town for a few weeks, and became acquainted with Bysshe. He had heard much of Cwm Elan, in Radnorshire (at that time belonging to my brother, but since sold), from my sister Harriet, and wishing much to see the place, he received an invitation from my brother Tom and his wife to go there that summer, which he did. Whilst on the visit his continued correspondence with Miss W. led to his return to London, and subsequent elopement with her. He corresponded with me also during this period, and wrote me a letter concerning what he termed his summons to link his fate with another, closing his communication thus: 'Hear it not, Percy, for it is a knell, which summons thee to heaven or to hell!' I sometimes think I have that letter locked up at S. If I go there in the summer, and find it, I will send it to you.

When Bysshe finally came to town to elope with Miss W., he came, as usual, to Lincoln's Inn Fields, and I was his companion on his visits to her, and finally accompanied them early one morning—I forget now the month or the date, but it might have

been September—in a hackney coach to the Green Dragon, in Gracechurch Street, where we remained all day, till the hour when the mail coaches start, when they departed in the northern mail for York. The following spring I saw Bysshe and Mrs. Shelley in London. They spent the summer of that year, 1812, with my brother and sister at Cwm Elan. Mrs. G. was very much pleased with Mrs. Shelley, and sorry when they left them. They intended at that time to settle in Wales, but I think they went to the Lakes instead, Bysshe having become acquainted with Southey. From that time I never saw Bysshe again. My brother may have seen something of him, either in town, or in Edinburgh, but I do not quite recollect how that was.

I am afraid I have not been able to remember anything of Bysshe's early life that will prove of use. Though I spent many an afternoon and evening with Bysshe and Mr. H., at almost every coffee-house in London, for they changed their dining place daily for the sake of variety, I cannot recapitulate the conversations, though vividly recollecting the scenes. Believe me, my dear H.,

Your affectionate cousin,

To H. S.

C. H. G.

TORQUAY, *Feb.* 25, 1857.

MY DEAR H.,

I am indeed glad to hear of the favourable reception given to my few early recollections of Bysshe. I remember on the occasion of our going to the Duke of Norfolk's house, Hills, at Horsham, Bysshe's putting on a working man's dress, and coming to my sister as a beggar, and also his taking up one of those very little chests of drawers, peculiar to old houses, such as Hills was, and carrying it off part of the way back to Field Place; and Elizabeth's being in a state of consternation lest her father should meet with us. But Bysshe had the power of entering so thoroughly into the spirit of his own humour, that nothing could stop him when once his spirits were up, and he carried you along with him in his hilarious flight, and made you a sharer in his mirth, in a manner quite irresistible.

During my intercourse with Bysshe this was his one happy year. I never saw him after that, but with some care on his mind. I forgot to mention before, that during the early part of the summer which Bysshe spent in town, after leaving Oxford, the Prince Regent gave a splendid fête at Carlton House, in which the novelty was introduced of a stream of water,

in imitation of a river, meandering down the middle of a very long table, in a temporary tent erected in Carlton Gardens. This was much commented upon in the papers, and laughed at by the Opposition. Bysshe also was of the number of those who disapproved of the fête and its accompaniments. He wrote a poem on the subject of about fifty lines, which he published immediately, wherein he apostrophized the prince as sitting on the bank of his tiny river; and he amused himself with throwing copies into the carriages of persons going to Carlton House after the fête.

Believe me, &c.,

C. H. G.

To H. S.

# RECOLLECTIONS OF THE LAST DAYS OF SHELLEY AND BYRON

BY

EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY

‘No living poet ever arrived at the fulness of his fame; the jury which sits in judgment upon a poet, belonging as he does to all time, must be composed of his peers: it must be impannelled by Time from the selectest of the wise of many generations.’

SHELLEY'S *Defence of Poetry*.

## TRELAWNY, EDWARD JOHN (1792-1881)

Spent most of his early life in an adventurous manner in India. Returned to England and married. In 1822 met Shelley and Byron in Italy. Was at Leghorn when Shelley perished, and was present at the cremation of the poet's body. In 1823 he went with Byron to take part in the Greek struggle for independence. Was refused permission to write a Life of Shelley, but produced in 1831 a highly coloured autobiography, *Adventures of a Younger Son*. Visited America and performed a number of exploits, including swimming across the river above Niagara Falls. In 1858 published *Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*. This was considerably changed, and reissued under the title of *Records of Shelley, Byron, and the Author* in 1878. It is generally agreed, however, that all the textual changes were changes for the worse. Trelawny was buried by the side of Shelley in Rome in accordance with his wishes.

## PREFACE

ANY details of the lives of men whose opinions have had a marked influence upon mankind, or from whose works we have derived pleasure or profit, cannot but be interesting. This conviction induces me to record some facts regarding Shelley and Byron, two of the last of the true poets. The matter contained in this small volume concerning them is derived partly from notes taken and letters written at the time the events occurred, and partly from memory. I wrote what is now printed, not systematically, but just as the incidents occurred to me, thinking that with the rough draft before me it would be an easy, if not an agreeable, task to re-write the whole in a connected form; but my plan is marred by my idleness or want of literary dexterity. I therefore commit the rough draft to the printer as first written, in 'most admired disorder'.

With reference to the likeness of Shelley in this volume,<sup>1</sup> I must add that he never sat to a professional artist. In 1819, at Rome, a daughter of the celebrated Curran began a portrait of him in oil, which she never finished, and left in an altogether flat and inanimate state. In 1821 or 1822, his friend Williams made a spirited water-colour drawing, which gave a very good idea of the poet. Out of these materials Mrs. Williams, on her return to England after the death of Shelley, got Clint to compose a portrait, which the few who knew Shelley in the last year of his life thought very like him. The water-colour drawing has been lost, so that the portrait done by Clint is the only one of any value. I have had it copied and lithographed by Mr. Vinter, an artist distinguished both for the fidelity and refinement of his works, and it is now published for the first time.

*February 1858.*

<sup>1</sup> Omitted from this edition.





## CHAPTER I

Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood  
Above the blind and battling multitude:  
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave  
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty.

*Sonnet to Wordsworth—SHELLEY.*

IN the summer of 1819 I was at Ouchy, a village on the margin of the lake of Geneva, in the Canton de Vaux. The most intelligent person I could find in the neighbourhood to talk to, was a young bookseller at Lausanne, educated at a German university; he was familiar with the works of many most distinguished writers; his reading was not confined, as it generally is with men of his craft, to catalogues and indexes, for he was an earnest student, and loved literature more than lucre.

As Lausanne is one of the inland harbours of refuge in which wanderers from all countries seek shelter, his shelves contained works in all languages; he was a good linguist, and read the most attractive of them. 'The elevation of minds,' he said, 'was more important than the height of mountains (I was looking at a scale of the latter), and books are the standards to measure them by.' He used to translate for me passages from the works of Schiller, Kant, Goethe, and others, and write comments on their paradoxical, mystical, and metaphysical theories. One morning I saw my friend sitting under the acacias on the terrace in front of the house in which Gibbon had lived, and where he wrote the *Decline and Fall*. He said: 'I am trying to sharpen my wits in this pungent air which gave such a keen edge to the great historian, so that I may fathom this book. Your modern poets, Byron, Scott, and Moore, I can read and understand as I walk along, but I have got hold of a book by one now that makes me stop to take breath and think'. It was Shelley's *Queen Mab*. As I had never heard that name or title, I asked how he got the volume. 'With a lot of new books in English, which I took in exchange for old French ones. Not knowing the names of the authors, I might not have looked into them, had not a pampered, prying priest smelt this one in my lumber-room, and, after a brief glance at the notes, exploded

in wrath, shouting out: "Infidel, jacobin, leveller: nothing can stop this spread of blasphemy but the stake and the faggot; the world is retrograding into accursed heathenism and universal anarchy!" When the priest had departed, I took up the small book he had thrown down, saying: "Surely there must be something here worth tasting". You know the proverb: "No person throws a stone at a tree that does not bear fruit".

'Priests do not,' I answered; 'so I, too, must have a bite of the forbidden fruit. What do you think of it?'

'To my taste,' said the bookseller, 'the fruit is crude, but well flavoured; it requires a strong stomach to digest it; the writer is an enthusiast, and has the true spirit of a poet; he aims at regenerating, not like Byron and Moore, levelling mankind. They say he is but a boy, and this his first offering: if that be true, we shall hear of him again.'

Some days after this conversation I walked to Lausanne, to breakfast at the hotel with an old friend, Captain Daniel Roberts, of the Navy. He was out, sketching, but presently came in accompanied by two English ladies, with whom he had made acquaintance whilst drawing, and whom he brought to our hotel. The husband of one of them soon followed. I saw by their utilitarian garb, as well as by the blisters and blotches on their cheeks, lips, and noses, that they were pedestrian tourists, fresh from the snow-covered mountains, the blazing sun and frosty air having acted on their unseasoned skins, as boiling water does on the lobster, by dyeing his dark coat scarlet. The man was evidently a denizen of the north, his accent harsh, skin white, of an angular and bony build, and self-confident and dogmatic in his opinions. The precision and quaintness of his language, as well as his eccentric remarks on common things, stimulated my mind. Our icy islanders thaw rapidly when they have drifted into warmer latitudes: broken loose from its anti-social system, mystic casts, coteries, sets and sects, they lay aside their purse-proud, tuft-hunting, and toadying ways, and are very apt to run riot in the enjoyment of all their senses. Besides we are compelled to talk in strange company, if not from good breeding, to prove our breed, as the gift of speech is often our principal if not sole distinction from the rest of the brute animals.

To return to our breakfast. The travellers, flushed with health, delighted with their excursion, and with appetites earned by bodily and mental activity, were in such high spirits that Roberts and I caught the infection of their mirth; we talked as

oud and fast as if under the exhilarating influence of champagne, instead of such a sedative compound as *café au lait*. can rescue nothing out of oblivion but a few last words. The stranger expressed his disgust at the introduction of carriages into the mountain districts of Switzerland, and at the old fogies who used them.

‘As to the arbitrary, pitiless, godless wretches,’ he exclaimed, who have removed nature’s landmarks by cutting roads through Alps and Apennines, until all things are reduced to the same lead level, they will be arraigned hereafter with the unjust: they have robbed the best specimens of what men should be, of their freeholds in the mountains; the eagle, the black cock, and the red deer they have tamed or exterminated. The lover of nature can nowhere find a solitary nook to contemplate her beauties. Yesterday,’ he continued, ‘at the break of day, I scaled the most rugged height within my reach; it looked inaccessible; this pleasant delusion was quickly dispelled; I was rudely startled out of a deep reverie by the accursed jarring, jingling, and rumbling of a caleche, and harsh voices that drowned the torrent’s fall.’

The stranger, now hearing a commotion in the street, sprang on his feet, looked out of the window, and rang the bell violently.

‘Waiter,’ he said, ‘is that our carriage? Why did you not tell us? Come, lasses, be stirring, the freshness of the day is gone. You may rejoice in not having to walk; there is a chance of saving the remnants of skin the sun has left on our chins and noses—to-day we shall be stewed instead of barbecued.’

On their leaving the room to get ready for their journey, my friend Roberts told me the strangers were the poet Wordsworth, his wife and sister.

Who could have divined this? I could see no trace, in the hard features and weather-stained brow of the outer-man, of the divinity within him. In a few minutes the travellers reappeared; we cordially shook hands, and agreed to meet again at Geneva. Now that I knew that I was talking to one of the veterans of the gentle craft, as there was no time to waste in idle ceremony, I asked him abruptly what he thought of Shelley as a poet?

‘Nothing,’ he replied, as abruptly.

Seeing my surprise, he added: ‘A poet who has not produced a good poem before he is twenty-five, we may conclude cannot, and never will do so’.

‘*The Cenci*!’ I said eagerly.

## 166 TRELAWNY'S SHELLEY AND BYRON

'Won't do,' he replied, shaking his head, as he got into the carriage: a rough-coated Scotch terrier followed him.

'This hairy fellow is our flea-trap,' he shouted out, as they started off.

When I recovered from the shock of having heard the harsh sentence passed by an elder bard on a younger brother of the Muses, I exclaimed:

'After all, poets are but earth. It is the old story—Envy—Cain and Abel. Professions, sects, and communities in general, right or wrong, hold together, men of the pen excepted; if one of their guild is worsted in the battle, they do as the rooks do by their inky brothers, fly from him, cawing and screaming; if they don't fire the shot, they sound the bugle to charge.'

I did not then know that the full-fledged author never reads the writings of his cotemporaries, except to cut them up in a review—that being a work of love. In after years, Shelley being dead, Wordsworth confessed this fact; he was then induced to read some of Shelley's poems, and admitted that Shelley was the greatest master of harmonious verse in our modern literature.

## CHAPTER II

Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake  
With the wide world I dwelt in, is a thing  
Which warns me with its stillness to forsake  
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.

*Childe Harold*—BYRON.

SHORTLY after I went to Geneva. In the largest country house (Plangeau) near that city lived a friend of mine, a Cornish baronet, a good specimen of the old school; well read, and polished by long intercourse with intelligent men of many nations. He retained a custom of the old barons, now obsolete—his dining-hall was open to all his friends; you were welcomed at his table as often as it suited you to go there, without the ceremony of inconvenient invitations.

At this truly hospitable house I first saw three young men, recently returned from India. They lived together at a pretty villa (*Maison aux Grenades*, signifying the House of Pomegranates), situated on the shores of the lake, and at an easy walk from the city of Geneva and the baronet's. Their names were George Jervoice, of the Madras Artillery; E. E. Williams, and Thomas Medwin, the two last, lieutenants on half-pay, late of the 8th Dragoons. Medwin was the chief medium that impressed us with a desire to know Shelley; he had known him from childhood; he talked of nothing but the inspired boy, his virtues and his sufferings, so that, irrespective of his genius, we all longed to know him. From all I could gather from him, Shelley lived as he wrote, the life of a true poet, loving solitude, but by no means a cynic. In the two or three months I was at Geneva I passed many agreeable days at the two villas I have mentioned. Late in the autumn I was unexpectedly called to England; Jervoice and Medwin went to Italy; the Williams's determined on passing the winter at Châlons-sur-Saône. I offered to drive them there, in a light Swiss carriage of my own; and in the spring to rejoin them, and to go on to Italy together in pursuit of Shelley.

Human animals can only endure a limited amount of pain or pleasure, excess of either is followed by insensibility. The Williams's, satiated with felicity at their charming villa on the

cheerful lake of Geneva, resolved to leave it, and see how long they could exist deprived of everything they had been accustomed to. With such an object, a French provincial town was just the place to try the experiment. Châlons-sur-Saône was decided on. We commenced our journey in November, in an open carriage. After four days' drive through wind, rain, and mud, we arrived at Châlons in a sorry plight. The immense plain which surrounded the town was flooded; we took up our quarters at an hotel on the slimy banks of the Saône. What a contrast to the villa of pomegranates we had left, we all thought—but said nothing.

When I left them by the *malle poste*, on my way to Paris, I felt as a man should feel when, stranded on a barren rock, he seizes the only boat and pushes off to the nearest land, leaving his forlorn comrades to perish miserably. After a course of spare diet of soupe maigre, bouilli, sour wine, and solitary confinement had restored their senses, they departed in the spring for the south, and never looked behind them until they had crossed the Alps. They went direct to the Shelleys; and amongst Williams's letters I find his first impressions of the poet, which I here transcribe:

PISA, April, 1821.

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

We purpose wintering in Florence, and sheltering ourselves from the summer heat at a castle of a place, called Villa Poschi, at Pugnano, two leagues from hence, where, with Shelley for a companion, I promise myself a great deal of pleasure, sauntering in the shady retreats of the olive and chestnut woods that grow above our heads up the hill sides. He has a small boat building, only ten or twelve feet long, to go adventuring, as he calls it, up the many little rivers and canals that intersect this part of Italy; some of which pass through the most beautiful scenery imaginable, winding among the terraced gardens at the base of the neighbouring mountains, and opening into such lakes as Beintina, etc.

Shelley is certainly a man of most astonishing genius, in appearance extraordinarily young, of manners mild and amiable, but withal full of life and fun. His wonderful command of language, and the ease with which he speaks on what are generally considered abstruse subjects, are striking; in short, his ordinary conversation is akin to poetry, for he sees things in the most singular and pleasing lights: if he wrote as he talked, he would be popular enough. Lord Byron and others think him by far the most imaginative poet of the day. The style of his lordship's letters to him is quite that of a pupil, such as asking his opinion, and demanding his advice on certain points, etc. I must tell you, that the idea of the tragedy of *Manfred*, and many of the philosophical, or rather metaphysical, notions interwoven in the composition of the fourth Canto of *Childe*





EDWARD JOHN TRELAWNY

*From a drawing by D. Lucas in the British Museum*



*Harold*, are of his suggestion; but this, of course, is between ourselves. A few nights ago I nearly put an end to the poet and myself. We went to Leghorn, to see after the little boat, and, as the wind blew excessively hard, and fair, we resolved upon returning to Pisa in her, and accordingly started with a huge sail, and at ten o'clock p.m. capsized her.

I commenced this letter yesterday morning, but was prevented from continuing it by the very person of whom I am speaking, who, having heard me complain of a pain in my chest since the time of our ducking, brought with him a doctor, and I am now writing to you in bed, with a blister on the part supposed to be affected. I am ordered to lie still and try to sleep, but I prefer sitting up and bringing this sheet to a conclusion. A General R., an Englishman, has been poisoned by his daughter and her paramour, a Venetian servant, by small doses of arsenic, so that the days of the Cenci are revived, with this difference, that crimes seem to strengthen with keeping. Poor Beatrice was driven to parricide by long and unendurable outrages: in this last case, the parent was sacrificed by the lowest of human passions, the basis of many crimes. By the by, talking of Beatrice and the Cenci, I have a horrid history to tell you of that unhappy girl, that it is impossible to put on paper: you will not wonder at the act, but admire the virtue (an odd expression, you will perhaps think) that inspired the blow. Adieu. Jane desires to be very kindly remembered, and believe me,

Very sincerely yours,

E. E. WILLIAMS.

In a subsequent letter he gave me a foretaste of what I might expect to find in Lord Byron.

PISA, *December, 1821.*

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

Why, how is this? I will swear that yesterday was Christmas Day, for I celebrated it at a splendid feast given by Lord Byron to what I call his Pistol Club—i.e. to Shelley, Medwin, a Mr. Taaffe, and myself, and was scarcely awake from the vision of it when your letter was put into my hands, dated 1st of *January, 1822*. Time flies fast enough, but you, in the rapidity of your motions, contrive to outwing the old fellow; rather take a plume or two from your mental pinions, and add them, like Mercury to your heels, and let us see you before another year draws upon us. Forty years hence, my lad, you will treat the present with more respect than to *ante-date* the coming one. But I hope that time with you will always fly as unheeded as it now appears to do. Lord Byron is the very spirit of this place—that is, to those few to whom, like Mokannah, he has lifted his veil. When you asked me, in your last letter, if it was probable to become at all intimate with him, I replied in a manner which I considered it most prudent to do, from motives which are best explained when I see you. Now, however, I know him a great deal better, and think I may safely say that that point will rest entirely with yourself. The eccentricities of an assumed character, which a total retirement from the world almost rendered a natural one, are daily wearing off. He sees none of the numerous English

who are here, excepting those I have named. And of this, I am selfishly glad, for one sees nothing of a man in mixed societies. It is difficult to move him, he says, when he is once fixed, but he seems bent upon joining our party at Spezzia next summer.

I shall reserve all that I have to say about the boat until we meet at the select committee, which is intended to be held on that subject when you arrive here. Have a boat we must, and if we can get Roberts to build her, so much the better. We are settled here for the winter, perhaps many winters, for we have taken apartments and furnished them. This is a step that anchors a man at once, nay, moors him head and stern: you will find us at the Tre Palazzi, 349, Lung' Arno. Pray, remember me to Roberts; tell him he must be content to take me by the hand, though he should not discover a pipe *in* my mouth, or mustachios on it—the first makes me sick, and the last makes Jane so.

Bring with you any new books you may have. There is a Mrs. B. here, with a litter of seven daughters, she is the gayest lady, and the only one who gives dances, for the young squaws are arriving at that age, when as Lord Byron says, they must waltz for their livelihood. When a man gets on this strain, the sooner he concludes his letter the better. Addio. Believe me,

Very truly yours,

E. E. WILLIAMS.

### CHAPTER III

O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,  
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men  
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart  
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?  
Defenceless as thou wert.

*Adonais*—SHELLEY.

I WAS not accustomed to the town life I was then leading, and became as tired of society as town folks are of solitude. The great evil in solitude is, that your brain lies idle; your muscles expand by exercise, and your wits contract from the want of it.

To obviate this evil and maintain the just equilibrium between the body and the brain, I determined to pass the coming winter in the wildest part of Italy, the Maremma, in the midst of the marshes and malaria, with my friends Roberts and Williams; keen sportsmen both—that part of the country being well stocked with woodcocks and wild fowl. For this purpose, I shipped an ample supply of dogs, guns, and other implements of the chase to Leghorn. For the exercise of my brain, I proposed passing my summer with Shelley and Byron, boating in the Mediterranean. After completing my arrangements, I started in the autumn by the French malle-poste, from Paris to Châlons, regained possession of the horse and cabriolet I had left with Williams, and drove myself to Geneva, where Roberts was waiting for me. After a short delay, I continued my journey south with Roberts in my Swiss carriage, so that we could go on or stop, where and when we pleased. By our method of travelling we could sketch, shoot, fish, and observe everything at our leisure. If our progress was slow, it was most pleasant. We crossed Mount Cenis, and in due course arrived at Genoa. After a long stop at that city of painted palaces, anxious to see the poet, I drove to Pisa alone. I arrived late, and after putting up my horse at the inn and dining, hastened to the Tre Palazzi, on the Lung' Arno, where the Shelleys and Williams's lived on different flats under the same roof, as is the custom on the Continent. The Williams's received me in their earnest cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put

out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway, she laughingly said:

'Come in, Shelley, it's only our friend Tre just arrived.'

Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment: was it possible this mild-looking, beardless boy, could be the veritable monster at war with all the world?—excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as the founder of a Satanic school? I could not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stinted him in his 'sizings'. Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? His face brightened, and he answered briskly:

'Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso*, I am translating some passages in it.'

'Oh, read it to us!'

Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analyzed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretation of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality I no longer doubted his identity; a dead silence ensued; looking up I asked:

'Where is he?'

Mrs. Williams said: 'Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where'.

Presently he reappeared with Mrs. Shelley. She brought us back from the ideal world Shelley had left us in, to the real one, welcomed me to Italy, and asked me the news of London and Paris, the new books, operas, and bonnets, marriages, murders,

and other marvels. The poet vanished, and tea appeared. Mary Wollstonecraft (the authoress), the wife of William Godwin, died in 1797 in giving birth to their only child, Mary, married to the poet Shelley; so that at the time I am speaking of Mrs. Shelley was twenty-seven. Such a rare pedigree of genius was enough to interest me in her, irrespective of her own merits as an authoress. The most striking feature in her face was her calm, grey eyes; she was rather under the English standard of woman's height, very fair and light-haired, witty, social, and animated in the society of friends, though mournful in solitude; like Shelley, though in a minor degree, she had the power of expressing her thoughts in varied and appropriate words, derived from familiarity with the works of our vigorous old writers. Neither of them used obsolete or foreign words. This command of our language struck me the more as contrasted with the scanty vocabulary used by ladies in society, in which a score of poor hackneyed phrases suffice to express all that is felt or considered proper to reveal.

## CHAPTER IV

This should have been a noble creature—he  
Hath all the energy which would have made  
A goodly frame of glorious elements  
Had they been wisely mingled.

*Manfred*—BYRON.

At two o'clock on the following day, in company with Shelley, I crossed the Ponte Vecchio, and went on the Lung' Arno to the Palazzo Lanfranchi, the residence of Lord Byron. We entered a large marble hall, ascended a giant staircase, passed through an equally large room over the hall, and were shown into a smaller apartment which had books and a billiard table in it. A surly-looking bulldog (Moretto) announced us, by growling, and the pilgrim instantly advanced from an inner chamber, and stood before us. His halting gait was apparent, but he moved with quickness; and although pale, he looked as fresh, vigorous, and animated, as any man I ever saw. His pride, added to his having lived for many years alone, was the cause I suppose that he was embarrassed at first meeting with strangers; this he tried to conceal by an affectation of ease. After the interchange of commonplace question and answer, he regained his self-possession and turning to Shelley, said:

'As you are addicted to poesy, go and read the versicles I was delivered of last night, or rather this morning—that is, if you can. I am posed. I am getting scurrilous. There is a letter from Tom Moore; read, you are blarneyed in it ironically.'

He then took a cue, and asked me to play billiards; he struck the balls and moved about the table briskly, but neither played the game nor cared a rush about it, and chatted after this idle fashion:

'The purser of the frigate I went to Constantinople in called an officer *scurrilous* for alluding to his wig. Now, the day before I mount a wig—and I shall soon want one—I'll ride about with it on the pummel of my saddle, or stick it on my cane.

'In that same frigate, near the Dardanelles, we nearly ran down an American trader with his cargo of notions. Our captain, old Bathurst, hailed, and with the dignity of a lord, asked him where he came from, and the name of his ship. The Yankee captain bellowed:

"“You copper-bottomed serpent, I guess you ’ll know when I ’ve reported you to Congress.””

The surprise I expressed by my looks was not at what he said, but that he could register such trifles in his memory. Of course with other such small anecdotes, his great triumph at having swum from Sestos to Abydos was not forgotten. I had come prepared to see a solemn mystery, and so far as I could judge from the first act it seemed to me very like a solemn farce. I forgot that great actors when off the stage are dull dogs; and that even the mighty Prospero, without his book and magic mantle, was but an ordinary mortal. At this juncture Shelley joined us; he never laid aside his book and magic mantle; he waved his wand, and Byron, after a faint show of defiance, stood mute; his quick perception of the truth of Shelley's comments on his poem transfixed him, and Shelley's earnestness and just criticism held him captive.

I was however struck with Byron's mental vivacity and wonderful memory; he defended himself with a variety of illustrations, precedents, and apt quotations from modern authorities, disputing Shelley's propositions, not by denying their truth as a whole, but in parts, and the subtle questions he put would have puzzled a less acute reasoner than the one he had to contend with. During this discussion I scanned the pilgrim closely.

In external appearance Byron realized that ideal standard with which imagination adorns genius. He was in the prime of life, thirty-five; of middle height, five feet eight and a half inches; regular features, without a stain or furrow on his pallid skin, his shoulders broad, chest open, body and limbs finely proportioned. His small, highly-finished head and curly hair had an airy and graceful appearance from the massiveness and length of his throat: you saw his genius in his eyes and lips. In short, Nature could do little more than she had done for him, both in outward form and in the inward spirit she had given to animate it. But all these rare gifts to his jaundiced imagination only served to make his one personal defect (lameness) the more apparent, as a flaw is magnified in a diamond when polished; and he brooded over that blemish as sensitive minds will brood until they magnify a wart into a wen.

His lameness certainly helped to make him sceptical, cynical, and savage. There was no peculiarity in his dress, it was adapted to the climate; a tartan jacket braided—he said it was the Gordon pattern, and that his mother was of that ilk. A blue velvet cap with a gold band, and very loose nankeen trousers,

strapped down so as to cover his feet: his throat was not bare, as represented in drawings. At three o'clock one of his servants announced that his horses were at the door, which broke off his discussion with Shelley, and we all followed him to the hall. At the outer door we found three or four very ordinary-looking horses; they had holsters on the saddles, and many other superfluous trappings, such as the Italians delight in, and Englishmen eschew. Shelley, and an Irish visitor just announced, mounted two of these sorry jades. I luckily had my own cattle. Byron got into a caleche, and did not mount his horse until we had cleared the gates of the town, to avoid, as he said, being stared at by the 'd—d Englishers', who generally congregated before his house on the Arno. After an hour or two of slow riding and lively talk—for he was generally in good spirits when on horseback—we stopped at a small *podere* on the roadside, and dismounting, went into the house, in which we found a table with wine and cakes. From thence we proceeded into the vineyard at the back; the servant brought two brace of pistols, a cane was stuck in the ground and a five paul-piece, the size of half a crown, placed in a slit at the top of the cane. Byron, Shelley, and I, fired at fifteen paces, and one of us generally hit the cane or the coin: our firing was pretty equal; after five or six shots each, Byron pocketed the battered money and sauntered about the grounds. We then remounted. On our return homewards Shelley urged Byron to complete something he had begun. Byron smiled and replied:

'John Murray, my patron and paymaster, says my plays won't act. I don't mind that, for I told him they were not written for the stage—but he adds, my poesy won't sell: that I do mind, for I have an "itching palm". He urges me to resume my old "*Corsair* style, to please the ladies".'

Shelley indignantly answered:

'That is very good logic for a bookseller, but not for an author: the shop interest is to supply the ephemeral demand of the day. It is not for him but you "to put a ring in the monster's nose" to keep him from mischief.'

Byron smiling at Shelley's warmth, said:

'John Murray is right, if not righteous: all I have yet written has been for women-kind; you must wait until I am forty, their influence will then die a natural death, and I will show the men what I can do.'

Shelley replied:

'Do it now—write nothing but what your conviction of its



truth inspires you to write; you should give counsel to the wise, and not take it from the foolish. Time will reverse the judgment of the vulgar. Contemporary criticism only represents the amount of ignorance genius has to contend with.'

I was then and afterwards pleased and surprised at Byron's passiveness and docility in listening to Shelley—but all who heard him felt the charm of his simple, earnest manner; while Byron knew him to be exempt from the egotism, pedantry, coxcombry, and, more than all, the rivalry of authorship, and that he was the truest and most discriminating of his admirers.

Byron looking at the western sky exclaimed:

'Where is the green your friend the Laker talks such fustian about?' meaning Coleridge:

Gazing on the western sky,  
And its peculiar tint of yellow green.

*Dejection : an Ode.*

'Who ever', asked Byron, 'saw a green sky?'

Shelley was silent, knowing that if he replied Byron would give vent to his spleen. So I said: 'The sky in England is oftener green than blue.'

'Black, you mean,' rejoined Byron; and this discussion brought us to his door.

As he was dismounting he mentioned two odd words that would rhyme. I observed on the felicity he had shown in this art, repeating a couplet out of *Don Juan*; he was both pacified and pleased at this, and putting his hand on my horse's crest, observed:

'If you are curious in these matters look in Swift. I will send you a volume; he beats us all hollow, his rhymes are wonderful.'

And then we parted for that day, which I have been thus particular in recording, not only as it was the first of our acquaintance, but as containing as fair a sample as I can give of his appearance, ordinary habits, and conversation.

## CHAPTER V

His house, his home, his heritage, his lands,  
The laughing dames in whom he did delight,

Without a sigh he left, to cross the brine  
And traverse Paynim shores and pass Earth's centra line.

*Childe Harold*—BYRON.

MEN of books, particularly poets, are rarely men of action, their mental energy exhausts their bodily powers. Byron has been generally considered an exception to this rule, he certainly so considered himself: let us look at the facts.

In 1809 he first left England, rode on horseback through Spain and Portugal, four hundred miles, crossed the Mediterranean on board a frigate, and landed in Greece; where he passed two years in sauntering through a portion of that small country: this, with a trip to Smyrna, Constantinople, Malta, and Gibraltar, generally on board our men-of-war, where you have all the ease, comfort, and most of the luxuries of your own homes—this is the extent of the voyages and travels he was so proud of. Anything more luxurious than sailing on those seas, and riding through those lands, and in such a blessed climate, I know from experience is not to be found in this world. Taking into account the result of these travels as shown in his works, he might well boast; he often said, if he had ever written a line worth preserving it was Greece that inspired it. After this trip he returned to England, and remained there some years, four or five; then abandoned it for ever, passed through the Netherlands, went up the Rhine, paused for some months in Switzerland, crossed the Alps into Italy, and never left that peninsula until the last year of his life. He was never in France, for when he left England, Paris was in the hands of the Allies, and he said he could not endure to witness a country associated in his mind with so many glorious deeds of arts and arms, bullied by 'certain rascal officers, slaves in authority, the knaves of justice!'

To return, however, to his travels. If you look at a map you will see what a narrow circle comprises his wanderings. Any man might go, and many have gone without the aid of steam,

over the same ground in a few months—even if he had to walk with a knapsack, where Byron rode. The pilgrim moved about like a Pasha, with a host of attendants, and all that he and they required on the journey. So far as I could learn from Fletcher, his yeoman bold—and he had been with him from the time of his first leaving England—Byron wherever he was, so far as it was practicable, pursued the same lazy, dawdling habits he continued during the time I knew him. He was seldom out of his bed before noon, when he drank a cup of very strong green tea, without sugar or milk. At two he ate a biscuit and drank soda-water. At three he mounted his horse and sauntered along the road—and generally the same road—if alone, racking his brains for fitting matter and rhymes for the coming poem, he dined at seven, as frugally as anchorites are said in story-books to have done, at nine he visited the family of Count Gamba, on his return home he sat reading or composing until two or three o'clock in the morning, and then to bed, often feverish, restless and exhausted—to dream, as he said, more than to sleep.

Something very urgent, backed by the importunity of those who had influence over him, could alone induce him to break through the routine I have described, for a day, and it was certain to be resumed on the next—he was constant in this alone.

His conversation was anything but literary, except when Shelley was near him. The character he most commonly appeared in was of the free and easy sort, such as had been in vogue when he was in London, and George IV was Regent; and his talk was seasoned with anecdotes of the great actors on and off the stage, boxers, gamblers, duellists, drunkards, etc., appropriately garnished with the slang and scandal of that day. Such things had all been in fashion, and were at that time considered accomplishments by gentlemen; and of this tribe of Mohawks the Prince Regent was the chief, and allowed to be the most perfect specimen. Byron, not knowing the tribe was extinct, still prided himself on having belonged to it; of nothing was he more indignant, than of being treated as a man of letters, instead of as a lord and a man of fashion: this prevented foreigners and literary people from getting on with him, for they invariably so offended. His long absence had not effaced the mark John Bull brands his children with; the instant he loomed above the horizon, on foot or horseback, you saw at a glance he was a Britisher. He did not understand foreigners, nor they him; and, during the time I knew him, he associated with no Italians except the family of Count Gamba. He seemed to

take an especial pleasure in making a clean breast to every new comer, as if to mock their previous conceptions of him, and to give the lie to the portraits published of him. He said to me, as we were riding together alone, shortly after I knew him:

'Now, confess, you expected to find me a "Timon of Athens", or a "Timur the Tartar"; or did you think I was a mere sing-song driveller of poesy, full of what I heard Braham at a rehearsal call "Entusamussy"; and are you not mystified at finding me what I am—a man of the world—never in earnest—laughing at all things mundane.'

Then he muttered, as to himself:

'The world is a bundle of hay,  
Mankind are the asses who pull.'

Any man who cultivates his intellectual faculty so highly as to seem at times inspired, would be too much above us, if, on closer inspection, we should not find it alloyed with weaknesses akin to our own. Byron soon put you at your ease on this point. Godwin, in his *Thoughts on Man*, says: 'Shakespeare, amongst all his varied characters, has not attempted to draw a perfect man'; and Pope says:

A perfect man's a thing the world ne'er saw.

At any rate I should not seek for a model amongst men of the pen; they are too thin-skinned and egotistical. In his perverse and moody humours, Byron would give vent to his Satanic vein. After a long silence, one day on horseback, he began:

'I have a conscience, although the world gives me no credit for it; I am now repenting, not of the few sins I have committed, but of the many I have not committed. There are things, too, we should not do, if they were not forbidden. My *Don Juan* was cast aside and almost forgotten, until I heard that the pharisaic synod in John Murray's back parlour had pronounced it as highly immoral, and unfit for publication. "Because thou art virtuous thinkest thou there shall be no more cakes and ale?" Now my brain is throbbing and must have vent. I opined gin was inspiration, but cant is stronger. To-day I had another letter warning me against the Snake (Shelley). He, alone, in this age of humbug, dares stem the current, as he did to-day the flooded Arno in his skiff, although I could not observe he made any progress. The attempt is better than being swept along as all the rest are, with the filthy garbage scoured from its banks.'

Taking advantage of this panegyric on Shelley, I observed, he might do him a great service at little cost, by a friendly word or

two in his next work, such as he had bestowed on authors of less merit.

Assuming a knowing look, he continued:

'All trades have their mysteries; if we crack up a popular author, he repays us in the same coin, principal and interest. A friend may have repaid money lent—can't say any of mine have; but who ever heard of the interest being added thereto?'

I rejoined:

'By your own showing you are indebted to Shelley; some of his best verses are to express his admiration of your genius.'

'Ay,' he said, with a significant look, 'who reads them? If we puffed the Snake, it might not turn out a profitable investment. If he cast off the slough of his mystifying metaphysics, he would want no puffing.'

Seeing I was not satisfied he added:

'If we introduced Shelley to our readers they might draw comparisons, and they are *odorous*.'

After Shelley's death Byron, in a letter to Moore, of the 2nd of August 1822, says:

'There is another man gone, about whom the world was ill-naturedly, and ignorantly, and brutally mistaken. It will, perhaps, do him justice *now*, when he can be no better for it.'

In a letter to Murray of an earlier date, he says:

'You were all mistaken about Shelley, who was without exception, the best and least selfish man I ever knew.'

And, again, he says: 'You are all mistaken about Shelley; you do not know how mild, how tolerant, how good he was.'

What Byron says of the world, that it will, perhaps, do Shelley justice when he can be no better for it, is far more applicable to himself. If the world erred, they did so in ignorance; Shelley was a myth to them. Byron had no such plea to offer, but he was neither just nor generous, and never drew his weapon to redress any wrongs but his own.

## CHAPTER VI

Few things surpass old wine; and they may preach  
Who please, the more because they preach in vain.  
Let us have wine and women, mirth and laughter,  
Sermons and soda-water the day after.

*Don Juan.*—BYRON.

BYRON has been accused of drinking deeply. Our universities, certainly, did turn out more famous drinkers than scholars. In the good old times, to drink lustily was the characteristic of all Englishmen, just as tuft-hunting is now. Eternal swilling, and the rank habits and braggadocio manners which it engendered, came to a climax in George IV's reign. Since then excessive drinking has gone out of fashion, but an elaborate style of gastronomy has come in to fill up the void; so there is not much gained. Byron used to boast of the quantity of wine he had drunk. He said: 'We young Whigs imbibed claret, and so saved our constitutions: the Tories stuck to port, and destroyed theirs and their country's'.

He bragged, too, of his prowess in riding, boxing, fencing, and even walking; but to excel in these things feet are as necessary as hands. It was difficult to avoid smiling at his boasting and self-glorification. In the water a fin is better than a foot, and in that element he did well; he was built for floating—with a flexible body, open chest, broad beam, and round limbs. If the sea was smooth and warm, he would stay in it for hours; but as he seldom indulged in this sport, and when he did, over-exerted himself, he suffered severely; which observing, and knowing how deeply he would be mortified at being beaten, I had the magnanimity when contending with him to give in.

He had a misgiving in his mind that I was trifling with him; and one day as we were on the shore, and the *Bolivar* at anchor, about three miles off, he insisted on our trying conclusions; we were to swim to the yacht, dine in the sea alongside of her, treading water the while, and then to return to the shore. It was calm and hot, and seeing he would not be fobbed off, we started. I reached the boat a long time before he did; ordered the edibles to be ready, and floated until he arrived. We ate

our fare leisurely, from off a grating that floated alongside, drank a bottle of ale, and I smoked a cigar, which he tried to extinguish—as he never smoked. We then put about, and struck off towards the shore. We had not got a hundred yards on our passage, when he retched violently, and, as that is often followed by cramp, I urged him to put his hand on my shoulder that I might tow him back to the schooner.

‘Keep off, you villain, don’t touch me. I’ll drown ere I give in.’

I answered as Iago did to Roderigo:

“‘A fig for drowning! drown cats and blind puppies.’ I shall go on board and try the effects of a glass of grog to stay my stomach.’

‘Come on,’ he shouted, ‘I am always better after vomiting.’

With difficulty I deluded him back; I went on board, and he sat on the steps of the accommodation-ladder, with his feet in the water. I handed him a wine-glass of brandy, and screened him from the burning sun. He was in a sullen mood, but after a time resumed his usual tone. Nothing could induce him to be landed in the schooner’s boat, though I protested I had had enough of the water.

‘You may do as you like,’ he called out, and plumped in, and we swam on shore.

He never afterwards alluded to this event, nor to his prowess in swimming, to me, except in the past tense. He was ill, and kept his bed for two days afterwards.

To return to his drinking propensities, after this digression about his gymnastic prowess: I must say, that of all his vauntings, it was, luckily for him, the emptiest—that is, after he left England and his boon companions, as I know nothing of what he did there. From all that I heard or witnessed of his habits abroad, he was and had been exceedingly abstemious in eating and drinking. When alone, he drank a glass or two of small claret or hock, and when utterly exhausted at night a single glass of grog; which when I mixed it for him I lowered to what sailors call ‘water bewitched’, and he never made any remark. I once, to try him, omitted the alcohol; he then said: ‘Tre, have you not forgotten the creature comfort?’ I then put in two spoonfuls, and he was satisfied. This does not look like an habitual toper. His English acquaintances in Italy were, he said in derision, all milksops. On the rare occasions of any of his former friends visiting him, he would urge them to have a carouse with him, but they had grown wiser. He used to say

that little Tommy Moore was the only man he then knew who stuck to the bottle and put him on his mettle, adding: 'But he is a native of the damp isle, where men subsist by suction'.

Byron had not damaged his body by strong drinks, but his terror of getting fat was so great that he reduced his diet to the point of absolute starvation. He was of that soft, lymphatic temperament which it is almost impossible to keep within a moderate compass, particularly as in his case his lameness prevented his taking exercise. When he added to his weight, even standing was painful, so he resolved to keep down to eleven stone, or shoot himself. He said everything he swallowed was instantly converted into tallow and deposited on his ribs.

He was the only human being I ever met with who had sufficient self-restraint and resolution to resist this proneness to fatten: he did so; and at Genoa, where he was last weighed, he was ten stone and nine pounds, and looked much less. This was not from vanity about his personal appearance, but from a better motive; and as, like Justice Greedy, he was always hungry, his merit was the greater. Occasionally he relaxed his vigilance, when he swelled apace.

I remember one of his old friends saying: 'Byron, how well you are looking!' If he had stopped there it had been well, but when he added: 'You are getting fat', Byron's brow reddened, and his eyes flashed—'Do you call getting fat looking well, as if I were a hog?' and, turning to me, he muttered: 'The beast, I can hardly keep my hands off him'. The man who thus offended him was the husband of the lady addressed as 'Genevra', and the original of his 'Zuleika', in the *Bride of Abydos*. I don't think he had much appetite for his dinner that day, or for many days, and never forgave the man who, so far from wishing to offend, intended to pay him a compliment.

Byron said he had tried all sorts of experiments to stay his hunger, without adding to his bulk. 'I swelled', he said, 'at one time to fourteen stone, so I clapped the muzzle on my jaws, and, like the hybernating animals, consumed my own fat.'

He would exist on biscuits and soda-water for days together, then, to allay the eternal hunger gnawing at his vitals, he would make up a horrid mess of cold potatoes, rice, fish, or greens, deluged in vinegar, and gobble it up like a famished dog. On either of these unsavoury dishes, with a biscuit and a glass or two of Rhine wine, he cared not how sour, he called feasting sumptuously. Upon my observing he might as well have fresh fish and vegetables, instead of stale, he laughed and answered:





CAPTAIN E. E. WILLIAMS

*From a drawing by himself, recovered from the wreck of the "Don Juan." In the British Museum*



'I have an advantage over you, I have no palate; one thing is as good as another to me.'

'Nothing', I said, 'disagrees with the natural man, he fasts and gorges, his nerves and brains don't bother him; but if you wish to live?'——

'Who wants to live?' he replied, 'not I. The Byrons are a short-lived race on both sides, father and mother: longevity is hereditary: I am nearly at the end of my tether. I don't care for death a d—n: it is her sting! I can't bear pain.'

His habits and want of exercise damaged him, not drink. It must be borne in mind, moreover, that his brain was always working at high pressure. The consequences resulting from his way of life were low or intermittent fevers; these last had fastened on him in his early travels in the Levant; and there is this peculiarity in malaria fevers, that if you have once had them, you are ever after peculiarly susceptible to a renewal of their attacks if within their reach, and Byron was hardly ever out of it. Venice and Ravenna are belted in with swamps, and fevers are rife in the autumn. By starving his body Byron kept his brains clear; no man had brighter eyes or a clearer voice; and his resolute bearing and prompt replies, when excited, gave to his body an appearance of muscular power that imposed on strangers. I never doubted, for he was indifferent to life, and prouder than Lucifer, that if he had drawn his sword in Greece, or elsewhere, he would have thrown away the scabbard.

## CHAPTER VII

O thou, who plumed with strong desire  
Would'st float above the earth, beware!  
A shadow tracks thy flight of fire—  
Night is coming!

*The Two Spirits*—SHELLEY.

IN the annals of authors I cannot find one who wrote under so many discouragements as Shelley; for even Bunyan's dungeon walls echoed the cheers of hosts of zealous disciples on the outside, whereas Shelley could number his readers on his fingers. He said: 'I can only print my writings by stinting myself in food!' Published, or sold openly, they were not.

The utter loneliness in which he was condemned to pass the largest portion of his life would have paralyzed any brains less subtilized by genius than his were. Yet he was social and cheerful, and, although frugal himself, most liberal to others, while to serve a friend he was ever ready to make any sacrifice. It was, perhaps, fortunate he was known to so few, for those few kept him close shorn. He went to Ravenna in 1821 on Byron's business, and, writing to his wife, makes this comment on the pilgrim's asking him to execute a delicate commission: 'But it seems destined that I am always to have some active part in the affairs of everybody whom I approach'. And so he had.

Shelley, in his elegy on the death of Keats, gives this picture of himself:

'Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,  
A phantom amongst men; companionless  
As the last cloud of an expiring storm,  
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,  
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,  
Actæon-like, and now he fled astray  
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,  
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,  
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

Every day I passed some hours with Byron, and very often my evenings with Shelley and Williams, so that when my memory summons one of them to appear, the others are sure to follow in his wake. If Byron's reckless frankness and apparent

cordiality warmed your feelings, his sensitiveness, irritability, and the perverseness of his temper, cooled them. I was not then thirty, and the exigences of my now full-blown vanities were unsated, and my credulity unexhausted. I believed in many things then, and believe in some now; I could not sympathize with Byron, who believed in nothing.

'As for love, friendship, and your *entusamusy*,' said he, 'they must run their course. If you are not hanged or drowned before you are forty, you will wonder at all the foolish things they have made you say and do—as I do now.'

'I will go over to the Shelleys,' I answered, 'and hear their opinions on the subject.'

'Ay, the Snake has fascinated you; I am for making a man of the world of you; they will mould you into a Frankenstein monster: so good night!'

Goethe's Mephistopheles calls the serpent that tempted Eve 'My aunt, the renowned snake'; and as Shelley translated and repeated passages of *Faust*—to, as he said, impregnate Byron's brain—when he came to that passage: 'My aunt, the renowned snake', Byron said: 'Then you are her nephew', and henceforth he often called Shelley, the Snake; his bright eyes, slim figure, and noiseless movements, strengthened, if it did not suggest, the comparison. Byron was the real snake—a dangerous mischief-maker; his wit or humour might force a grim smile, or hollow laugh, from the standers by, but they savoured more of pain than playfulness, and made you dissatisfied with yourself and him. When I left his gloomy hall, and the echoes of the heavy iron-plated door died away, I could hardly refrain from shouting with joy as I hurried along the broad-flagged terrace which overhangs the pleasant river, cheered on my course by the cloudless sky, soft air, and fading light, which close an Italian day.

After a hasty dinner at my albergo, I hastened along the Arno to the hospitable and cheerful abode of the Shelleys. There I found those sympathies and sentiments which the pilgrim denounced as illusions believed in as the only realities.

Shelley's mental activity was infectious; he kept your brain in constant action. Its effect on his comrade was very striking. Williams gave up all his accustomed sports for books, and the bettering of his mind; he had excellent natural ability; and the poet delighted to see the seeds he had sown, germinating. Shelley said he was the sparrow educating the young of the cuckoo. After a protracted labour Ned was delivered of a

five-act play. Shelley was sanguine that his pupil would succeed as a dramatic writer. One morning I was in Mrs. Williams's drawing-room, by appointment, to hear Ned read an act of his drama. I sat with an aspect as caustic as a critic who was to decide his fate. Whilst thus intent Shelley stood before us with a most woeful expression.

Mrs. Williams started up, exclaiming: 'What's the matter, Percy?'

'Mary has threatened me.'

'Threatened you with what?'

He looked mysterious and too agitated to reply.

Mrs. Williams repeated: 'With what? to box your ears?'

'Oh, much worse than that; Mary says she will have a party; there are English singers here, the Sinclairs, and she will ask them, and every one she or you know—oh, the horror!'

We all burst into a laugh except his friend Ned.

'It will kill me.'

'Music kill you!' said Mrs. Williams. 'Why, you have told me, you flatterer, that you loved music.'

'So I do. It's the company terrifies me. For pity go to Mary and intercede for me; I will submit to any other species of torture than that of being bored to death by idle ladies and gentlemen.'

After various devices it was resolved that Ned Williams should wait upon the lady—he being gifted with a silvery tongue, and sympathizing with the poet in his dislike of fine ladies—and see what he could do to avert the threatened invasion of the poet's solitude. Meanwhile, Shelley remained in a state of restless ecstasy; he could not even read or sit. Ned returned with a grave face; the poet stood as a criminal stands at the bar, whilst the solemn arbitrator of his fate decides it. 'The lady', commenced Ned, 'has set her heart on having a party, and will not be baulked'; but, seeing the poet's despair, he added: 'It is to be limited to those here assembled, and some of Count Gamba's family; and instead of a musical feast—as we have no souls—we are to have a dinner'. The poet hopped off, rejoicing, making a noise I should have thought whistling, but that he was ignorant of that accomplishment.

I have seen Shelley and Byron in society, and the contrast was as marked as their characters. The former, not thinking of himself, was as much at ease as in his own home, omitting no occasion of obliging those whom he came in contact with, readily conversing with all or any who addressed him, irrespective

of age or rank, dress or address. To the first party I went with Byron, as we were on our road, he said:

‘It’s so long since I have been in English society, you must tell me what are their present customs. Does rank lead the way, or does the ambassadress pair us off into the dining-room? Do they ask people to wine? Do we exit with the women, or stick to our claret?’

On arriving he was flushed, fussy, embarrassed, over ceremonious, and ill at ease, evidently thinking a great deal of himself and very little of others. He had learnt his manners, as I have said, during the regency, when society was more exclusive than even now, and consequently more vulgar.

To know an author personally is too often but to destroy the illusion created by his works; if you withdraw the veil of your idol’s sanctuary, and see him in his night-cap, you discover a querulous old crone, a sour pedant, a supercilious coxcomb, a servile tuft-hunter, a saucy snob, or, at best, an ordinary mortal. Instead of the high-minded seeker after truth and abstract knowledge, with a nature too refined to bear the vulgarities of life, as we had imagined, we find him full of egotism and vanity, and eternally fretting and fuming about trifles. As a general rule, therefore, it is wise to avoid writers whose works amuse or delight you, for when you see them they will delight you no more. Shelley was a grand exception to this rule. To form a just idea of his poetry you should have witnessed his daily life; his words and actions best illustrated his writings. If his glorious conception of gods and men constituted an atheist, I am afraid all that listened were little better. Sometimes he would run through a great work on science, condense the author’s laboured exposition, and by substituting simple words for the jargon of the schools, make the most abstruse subject transparent. The cynic Byron acknowledged him to be the best and ablest man he had ever known. The truth was, Shelley loved everything better than himself. Self-preservation is, they say, the first law of nature, with him it was the last; and the only pain he ever gave his friends arose from the utter indifference with which he treated everything concerning himself. I was bathing one day in a deep pool in the Arno, and astonished the poet by performing a series of aquatic gymnastics, which I had learnt from the natives of the South Seas. On my coming out, whilst dressing, Shelley said mournfully:

‘Why can’t I swim, it seems so very easy?’

I answered: ‘Because you think you can’t. If you determine,

you will; take a header off this bank, and when you rise turn on your back, you will float like a duck; but you must reverse the arch in your spine, for it's now bent the wrong way'.

He doffed his jacket and trousers, kicked off his shoes and socks, and plunged in, and there he lay stretched out on the bottom like a conger eel, not making the least effort or struggle to save himself. He would have been drowned if I had not instantly fished him out. When he recovered his breath, he said:

'I always find the bottom of the well, and they say Truth lies there. In another minute I should have found it, and you would have found an empty shell. It is an easy way of getting rid of the body.'

'What would Mrs. Shelley have said to me if I had gone back with your empty cage?'

'Don't tell Mary—not a word!' he rejoined, and then continued: 'It's a great temptation; in another minute I might have been in another planet'.

'But as you always find the bottom,' I observed, 'you might have sunk "deeper than did ever plummet sound".'

'I am quite easy on that subject,' said the bard. 'Death is the veil, which those who live call life: they sleep, and it is lifted. Intelligence should be imperishable; the art of printing has made it so in this planet.'

'Do you believe in the immortality of the spirit?'

He continued: 'Certainly not; how can I? We know nothing; we have no evidence; we cannot express our inmost thoughts. They are incomprehensible even to ourselves'.

'Why', I asked, 'do you call yourself an atheist? it annihilates you in this world.'

'It is a word of abuse to stop discussion, a painted devil to frighten the foolish, a threat to intimidate the wise and good. I used it to express my abhorrence of superstition; I took up the word, as a knight took up a gauntlet, in defiance of injustice. The delusions of Christianity are fatal to genius and originality: they limit thought.'

Shelley's thirst for knowledge was unquenchable. He set to work on a book, or a pyramid of books; his eyes glistening with an energy as fierce as that of the most sordid gold-digger who works at a rock of quartz, crushing his way through all impediments, no grain of the pure ore escaping his eager scrutiny. I called on him one morning at ten, he was in his study with a German folio open, resting on the broad marble mantelpiece,



over an old-fashioned fireplace, and with a dictionary in his hand. He always read standing if possible. He had promised overnight to go with me, but now begged me to let him off. I then rode to Leghorn, eleven or twelve miles distant, and passed the day there; on returning at six in the evening to dine with Mrs. Shelley and the Williams's, as I had engaged to do, I went into the poet's room and found him exactly in the position in which I had left him in the morning, but looking pale and exhausted.

'Well,' I said, 'have you found it?'

Shutting the book and going to the window, he replied: 'No, I have lost it': with a deep sigh: 'I have lost a day'.

'Cheer up, my lad, and come to dinner.'

Putting his long fingers through his masses of wild tangled hair, he answered faintly: 'You go, I have dined—late eating don't do for me'.

'What is this?' I asked as I was going out of the room, pointing to one of his bookshelves with a plate containing bread and cold meat on it.

'That,' colouring, 'why that must be my dinner. It's very foolish; I thought I had eaten it.'

Saying I was determined that he should for once have a regular meal, I lugged him into the dining-room, but he brought a book with him and read more than he ate. He seldom ate at stated periods, but only when hungry—and then like the birds, if he saw something edible lying about—but the cupboards of literary ladies are like Mother Hubbard's, bare. His drink was water, or tea if he could get it, bread was literally his staff of life; other things he thought superfluous. An Italian who knew his way of life, not believing it possible that any human being would live as Shelley did, unless compelled by poverty, was astonished when he was told the amount of his income, and thought he was defrauded or grossly ignorant of the value of money. He, therefore, made a proposition which much amused the poet, that he, the friendly Italian, would undertake for ten thousand crowns a year to keep Shelley like a grand seigneur, to provide his table with luxuries, his house with attendants, a carriage and opera box for my lady, besides adorning his person after the most approved Parisian style. Mrs. Shelley's toilette was not included in the wily Italian's estimates. The fact was, Shelley stinted himself to bare necessities, and then often lavished the money, saved by unprecedented self-denial, on selfish fellows who denied themselves nothing; such as the great philosopher had in his eye, when he said: 'It is the nature of extreme self-lovers, as

they will set a house on fire, an it were only to roast their own eggs.'

Byron on our voyage to Greece, talking of England, after commenting on his own wrongs, said: 'And Shelley, too, the best and most benevolent of men; they hooted him out of his country like a mad dog, for questioning a dogma. Man is the same rancorous beast now that he was from the beginning, and if the Christ they profess to worship reappeared they would again crucify him'.

## CHAPTER VIII

Where the pine its garland weaves  
Of sapless green and ivy dun,  
Round stems that never kiss the sun,  
Where the lawns and pastures be  
And the sand-hills of the sea.

*The Invitation*—SHELLEY.

BYRON's literary was, like Alexander's military career, one great triumph; but whilst he was at the zenith of his popularity, he railed against the world's injustice. Was this insanity, or what polite doctors now call a softening of the brain? I suppose, by the 'world' he meant no more than the fashionable set he had seen squeezed together in a drawing-room, and by all the press that attacked him—the fraction of it which took its tone from some small but active clique: as to friends deserting him, that could not be, for it was his boast that he never had attempted to make any after his school hallucinations. But in the pride of his strength, and the audacity of his youth, enemies he certainly did make, and when they saw an opportunity of getting rid of a supercilious rival, they instinctively took advantage of it. As to the poet's differences with his wife, they must have appeared absurd to men who were as indifferent to their own wives as were the majority of Byron's enemies.

When the most worldly wise and unimpassioned marry, they take a leap in the dark, and can no more foresee the consequences than poets—owls blinded by the light of their vain imaginations. The worldly wise, not having risked or anticipated much, stand to their bargain 'for better or worse', and say nothing about it; but the irascible tribe of songsters, when they find that marriage is not exactly what they imagined it to be, 'proclaim their griefs from the housetop', as Byron did.

Very pretty books have been written on the 'Loves of the Angels' and 'Loves of the Poets', and Love universal—but when lovers are paired and caged together in holy matrimony, the curtain is dropped, and we hear no more of them. It may be they moult their feathers and lose their song. Byron's marriage must not be classed with those of the poets, but of the worldly wise; he was not under the illusion of love, but of money. If he had left his wife and cut society (the last he was resolved on doing), he would have been content: that his wife and society should have cast him off, was a mortification his pride could

never forgive nor forget. As to the oft-vexed question of the poet's separation from his wife, he has told the facts in prose and verse; but omitted to state, that he treated women as things devoid of soul or sense; he would not eat, pray, walk, nor talk with them. If he had told us this, who would have marvelled that a lady, tenderly reared and richly endowed, pious, learned, and prudent, deluded into marrying such a man, should have thought him mad or worse, and sought safety by flight. Within certain degrees of affinity marriages are forbidden; so they should be where there is no natural affinity of feelings, habits, tastes, or sympathies. It is very kind in the saints to ally themselves to sinners, but in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred it turns out a failure; in Byron's case it was signally so.

In all the transactions of his life his intense anxiety to cut a good figure made him cruelly unjust to others. In fact, his pride and vanity mastered him, and he made no effort to conceal or to control their dominion, reckless how it marred his worldly advantages. Amidst the general homage paid to his genius, his vanity reverted to his early disappointments, when he was baffled and compelled to fly, and though Parthian-like he discharged his arrows on his pursuers, he lost the battle.

Shelley had a far loftier spirit. His pride was spiritual. When attacked, he neither fled nor stood at bay, nor altered his course, but calmly went on with heart and mind intent on elevating his species. Whilst men tried to force him down to their level, he toiled to draw their minds upwards. His words were: 'I always go on until I am stopped, and I never am stopped'. Like the Indian palms, Shelley never flourished far from water. When compelled to take up his quarters in a town, he every morning with the instinct that guides the water-birds, fled to the nearest lake, river, or seashore, and only returned to roost at night. If debarred from this, he sought out the most solitary places. Towns and crowds distracted him. Even the silent and half-deserted cities of Italy, with their temples, palaces, paintings and sculpture, could not make him stay if there was a wood or water within his reach. At Pisa, he had a river under his window, and a pine forest in the neighbourhood.

I accompanied Mrs. Shelley to this wood in search of the poet, on one of those brilliant spring mornings we on the wrong side of the Alps are so rarely blessed with. A caleche took us out of Pisa through the gate of the Cascine; we drove through the Cascine and onwards for two or three miles, traversing the vineyards and farms, on the Grand Ducal estate. On approach-

ing some farm buildings, near which were a hunting-palace and chapel, we dismissed the carriage, directing the driver to meet us at a certain spot in the afternoon. We then walked on, not exactly knowing what course to take, and were exceedingly perplexed on coming to an open space, from which four roads radiated. There we stopped until I learnt from a Contadino, that the one before us led directly to the sea, which was two or three miles distant, the one on the right, led to the Serchio, and that on the left, to the Arno: we decided on taking the road to the sea. We proceeded on our journey over a sandy plain; the sun being near its zenith. Walking was not included among the number of accomplishments in which Mrs. Shelley excelled; the loose sand and hot sun soon knocked her up. When we got under the cool canopy of the pines, she stopped and allowed me to hunt for her husband. I now strode along; the forest was on my right hand and extensive pastures on my left, with herds of oxen, camels, and horses grazing thereon. I came upon the open sea at a place called Gombo, from whence I could see Via Reggio, the Gulf of Spezzia, and the mountains beyond. After bathing, seeing nothing of the poet, I penetrated the densest part of the forest, ever and anon making the woods ring with the name of Shelley, and scaring the herons and water-birds from the chain of stagnant pools which impeded my progress.

With no landmarks to guide me, nor sky to be seen above, I was bewildered in this wilderness of pines and ponds; so I sat down, struck a light, and smoked a cigar. A red man would have known his course by the trees themselves, their growth, form, and colour; or if a footstep had passed that day, he would have hit upon its trail. As I mused upon his sagacity and my own stupidity, the braying of a brother jackass startled me. He was followed by an old man picking up pine cones. I asked him if he had seen a stranger?

'L'Inglese malincolico haunts the wood maledetta. I will show you his nest.'

As we advanced the ground swelled into mounds and hollows. By and by the old fellow pointed with his stick to a hat, books, and loose papers lying about, and then to a deep pool of dark glimmering water, saying 'Eccolo!' I thought he meant that Shelley was in or under the water. The careless, not to say impatient, way in which the poet bore his burden of life, caused a vague dread amongst his family and friends that he might lose or cast it away at any moment.

The strong light streamed through the opening of the trees.

One of the pines, undermined by the water, had fallen into it. Under its lee, and nearly hidden, sat the poet, gazing on the dark mirror beneath, so lost in his bardish reverie that he did not hear my approach. There the trees were stunted and bent, and their crowns were shorn like friars by the sea breezes, excepting a cluster of three, under which Shelley's traps were lying; these overtopped the rest. To avoid startling the poet out of his dream, I squatted under the lofty trees, and opened his books. One was a volume of his favourite Greek dramatist, Sophocles—the same that I found in his pocket after his death—and the other was a volume of Shakespeare. I then hailed him, and, turning his head, he answered faintly:

'Hallo, come in.'

'Is this your study?' I asked.

'Yes,' he answered, 'and these trees are my books—they tell no lies. You are sitting on the stool of inspiration,' he exclaimed. 'In those three pines the weird sisters are imprisoned, and this', pointing to the water, 'is their cauldron of black broth. The Pythian priestesses uttered their oracles from below—now they are muttered from above. Listen to the solemn music in the pine-tops—don't you hear the mournful murmurings of the sea? Sometimes they rave and roar, shriek and howl, like a rabble of priests. In a tempest, when a ship sinks, they catch the despairing groans of the drowning mariners. Their chorus is the eternal wailing of wretched men.'

'They, like the world,' I observed, 'seem to take no note of wretched women. The sighs and wailing you talk about are not those of wretched men afar off, but are breathed by a woman near at hand—not from the pine-tops, but by a forsaken lady.'

'What do you mean?' he asked.

'Why, that an hour or two ago I left your wife, Mary Shelley, at the entrance of this grove, in despair at not finding you.'

He started up, snatched up his scattered books and papers, thrust them into his hat and jacket pockets, sighing 'Poor Mary! hers is a sad fate. Come along; she can't bear solitude, nor I society—the quick coupled with the dead'.

He glided along with his usual swiftness, for nothing could make him pause for an instant when he had an object in view, until he had attained it. On hearing our voices Mrs. Shelley joined us; her clear grey eyes and thoughtful brow expressing the love she could not speak. To stop Shelley's self-reproaches, or to hide her own emotions, she began in a bantering tone, chiding and coaxing him:

'What a wild goose you are, Percy; if my thoughts have strayed from my book, it was to the opera, and my new dress from Florence—and especially the ivy wreath so much admired for my hair, and not to you, you silly fellow! When I left home my satin slippers had not arrived. These are serious matters to gentlewomen, enough to ruffle the serenest tempered. As to you and your ungallant companion I had forgotten that such things are; but as it is the ridiculous custom to have men at balls and operas, I must take you with me, though, from your uncouth ways, you will be taken for Valentine and he for Orson.'

Shelley, like other students, would, when the spell that bound his faculties was broken, shut his books, and indulge in the wildest flights of mirth and folly. As this is a sport all can join in, we talked and laughed, and shrieked, and shouted, as we emerged from under the shadows of the melancholy pines and their nodding plumes, into the now cool purple twilight and open country. The cheerful and graceful peasant girls, returning home from the vineyards and olive groves, stopped to look at us. The old man I had met in the morning gathering pine cones, passed hurriedly by with his donkey, giving Shelley a wide berth, and evidently thinking that the melancholy Englishman had now become a raving maniac. Sancho says: 'Blessings on the man who invented sleep'; the man who invented laughing deserves no less.

The day I found Shelley in the pine forest he was writing verses on a guitar. I picked up a fragment, but could only make out the first two lines:

Ariel, to Miranda take  
This slave of music.

It was a frightful scrawl; words smeared out with his finger, and one upon the other, over and over in tiers, and all run together in most 'admired disorder'; it might have been taken for a sketch of a marsh overgrown with bulrushes, and the blots for wild ducks; such a dashed off daub as self-conceited artists mistake for a manifestation of genius. On my observing this to him he answered:

'When my brain gets heated with thought, it soon boils, and throws off images and words faster than I can skim them off. In the morning, when cooled down, out of the rude sketch as you justly call it, I shall attempt a drawing. If you ask me why I publish what few or none will care to read, it is that the spirits I have raised haunt me until they are sent to the devil of a printer. All authors are anxious to breech their bantlings.'

## CHAPTER IX

So as we rode, we talked; the swift thought,  
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,  
But flew from brain to brain.

SHELLEY.

ONE day I drove the poet to Leghorn. In answer to my questions, Shelley said: 'In writing *The Cenci* my object was to see how I could succeed in describing passions I have never felt, and to tell the most dreadful story in pure and refined language. The image of Beatrice haunted me after seeing her portrait. The story is well authenticated, and the details far more horrible than I have painted them. *The Cenci* is a work of art; it is not coloured by my feelings, nor obscured by my metaphysics. I don't think much of it. It gave me less trouble than anything I have written of the same length.

'I am now writing a play for the stage. It is affectation to say we write a play for any other purpose. The subject is from English history; in style and manner I shall approach as near our great dramatist as my feeble powers will permit. King Lear is my model, for that is nearly perfect. I am amazed at my presumption. Poets should be modest. My audacity savours of madness.

'Considering the labour requisite to excel in composition, I think it would be better to stick to one style. The clamour for novelty is leading us all astray. Yet, at Ravenna, I urged Byron to come out of the dismal 'wood of error' into the sun, to write something new and cheerful. *Don Juan* is the result. The poetry is superior to *Childe Harold*, and the plan, or rather want of plan, gives scope to his astonishing natural powers.

'My friends say my *Prometheus* is too wild, ideal, and perplexed with imagery. It may be so. It has no resemblance to the Greek drama. It is original; and cost me severe mental labour. Authors, like mothers, prefer the children who have given them most trouble. Milton preferred his *Paradise Regained*, Petrarch his *Africa*, and Byron his *Doge of Venice*.

'I have the vanity to write only for poetical minds, and must be satisfied with few readers. Byron is ambitious; he writes for all, and all read his works.



'With regard to the great question, the System of the Universe, I have no curiosity on the subject. I am content to see no farther into futurity than Plato and Bacon. My mind is tranquil; I have no fears and some hopes. In our present gross material state our faculties are clouded—when Death removes our clay coverings the mystery will be solved.'

He thought a play founded on Shakespeare's *Timon* would be an excellent mode of discussing our present social and political evils dramatically, and of descanting on them.

After we had done our business I called on a Scotch family and lured my companion in. He abhorred forcing himself on strangers—so I did not mention his name, merely observing:

'As you said you wanted information about Italy, here is a friend of mine can give it you—for I cannot.'

The ladies—for there was no man there—were capital specimens of Scotchwomen, fresh from the land of cakes—frank, fair, intelligent, and of course, pious. After a long and earnest talk we left them, but not without difficulty, so pressing were they for us to stop to dinner.

When I next visited them they were disappointed at the absence of my companion; and when I told them it was Shelley, the young and handsome mother clasped her hands, and exclaimed:

'Shelley! That bright-eyed youth—so gentle, so intelligent—so thoughtful for us. Oh, why did you not name him?'

'Because he thought you would have been shocked.'

'Shocked!—why, I would have knelt to him in penitence for having wronged him even in my thoughts. If he is not pure and good—then there is no truth and goodness in this world. His looks reminded me of my own blessed baby—so innocent—so full of love and sweetness.'

'So is the serpent that tempted Eve described,' I said.

'Oh, you wicked scoffer!' she continued, 'but I know you love him. I shall have no peace of mind until you bring him here. You remember, sister, I said his young face had lines of care and sorrow on it—when he was showing us the road to Rome on the map and the sun shone on it—poor boy! Oh, tell us about his wife—is she worthy of him? She must love him dearly—and so must all who know him.'

To palliate the warm-hearted lady's admiration of the poet—as well as my own—I must observe, that all on knowing him sang the same song; and as I have before observed, even Byron in his most moody and cynical vein, joined in the chorus, echoing

my monotonous notes. The reason was, that after having heard or read the rancorous abuse heaped on Shelley by the mercenary literature of the day—in which he was described as a monster more hideous than Caliban—the revulsion of feeling on seeing the man was so great, that he seemed as gentle a spirit as Ariel. There never has been nor can be any true likeness of him. Desdemona says: 'I saw Othello's visage in his mind', and Shelley's 'visage' as well as his mind are to be seen in his works.

When I was at Leghorn with Shelley I drew him towards the docks, saying:

'As we have a spare hour let 's see if we can't put a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes. In these docks are living specimens of all the nationalities of the world; thus we can go round it, and visit and examine any particular nation we like, observing their peculiar habits, manners, dress, language, food, productions, arts, and naval architecture; for see how varied are the shapes, build, rigging, and decoration of the different vessels. There lies an English cutter, a French chasse marée, an American clipper, a Spanish tartan, an Austrian trabacolo, a Genoese felucca, a Sardinian zebeck, a Neapolitan brig, a Sicilian sparanza, a Dutch galleot, a Danish snow, a Russian hermaphrodite, a Turkish sackalever, a Greek bombard. I don't see a Persian dow, an Arab grab, or a Chinese junk; but there are enough for our purpose and to spare. As you are writing a poem, *Hellas*, about the modern Greeks, would it not be as well to take a look at them amidst all the din of the docks? I hear their shrill nasal voices, and should like to know if you can trace in the language or lineaments of these Greeks of the nineteenth century, A.D., the faintest resemblance to the lofty and sublime spirits who lived in the fourth century B.C. An English merchant who has dealings with them told me he thought these modern Greeks were, if judged by their actions, a cross between the Jews and gipsies—but here comes the Capitano Zarita; I know him.'

So dragging Shelley with me I introduced him, and asking to see the vessel, we crossed the plank from the quay and stood on the deck of the *San Spiridione* in the midst of her chattering irascible crew. They took little heed of the skipper, for in these trading vessels each individual of the crew is part owner, and has some share in the cargo; so they are all interested in the speculation—having no wages. They squatted about the decks in small knots, shrieking, gesticulating, smoking, eating, and gambling like savages.

'Does this realize your idea of Hellenism, Shelley?' I said.

'No! but it does of Hell,' he replied.

The captain insisted on giving us pipes and coffee in his cabin, so I dragged Shelley down. Over the rudder-head facing us, there was a gilt box enshrining a flaming gaudy daub of a saint, with a lamp burning before it; this was Il Padre Santo Spiridione, the ship's godfather. The skipper crossed himself and squatted on the dirty divan. Shelley talked to him about the Greek revolution that was taking place, but from its interrupting trade the captain was opposed to it.

'Come away!' said Shelley. 'There is not a drop of the old Hellenic blood here. These are not the men to rekindle the ancient Greek fire; their souls are extinguished by traffic and superstition. Come away!'—and away we went.

'It is but a step', I said, 'from these ruins of worn-out Greece to the New World, let's board the American clipper.'

'I had rather not have any more of my hopes and illusions mocked by sad realities,' said Shelley.

'You must allow,' I answered, 'that graceful craft was designed by a man who had a poet's feeling for things beautiful; let's get a model and build a boat like her.'

The idea so pleased the poet that he followed me on board her. The Americans are a social, free-and-easy people, accustomed to take their own way, and to readily yield the same privilege to all others, so that our coming on board, and examination of the vessel, fore and aft, were not considered as intrusion. The captain was on shore, so I talked to the mate, a smart specimen of a Yankee. When I commended her beauty, he said:

'I do expect, now we have our new copper on, she has a look of the brass serpent, she has as slick a run, and her bearings are just where they should be.'

I said we wished to build a boat after her model.

'Then I calculate you must go to Baltimore or Boston to get one; there is no one on this side the water can do the job. We have our freight all ready, and are homeward-bound; we have elegant accommodation, and you will be across before your young friend's beard is ripe for a razor. Come down, and take an observation of the state cabin.'

It was about seven-and-a-half feet by five; 'plenty of room to live or die comfortably in', he observed, and then pressed us to have a chaw of real old Virginian cake, i.e. tobacco, and a cool drink of peach brandy. I made some observation to him about the Greek vessel we had visited.

'Crank as an eggshell,' he said; 'too many sticks and top hamper, she looks like a bundle of chips going to hell to be burnt.'

I seduced Shelley into drinking a wine-glass of weak grog, the first and last he ever drank. The Yankee would not let us go until we had drunk, under the star-spangled banner, to the memory of Washington, and the prosperity of the American commonwealth.

'As a warrior and statesman,' said Shelley, 'he was righteous in all he did, unlike all who lived before or since; he never used his power but for the benefit of his fellow-creatures:

He fought,  
For truth and wisdom, foremost of the brave;  
Him glory's idle glances dazzled not;  
'Twas his ambition, generous and great,  
A life to life's great end to consecrate'.

'Stranger,' said the Yankee, 'truer words were never spoken; there is dry rot in all the main timbers of the Old World, and none of you will do any good till you are docked, refitted, and annexed to the New. You must log that song you sang; there ain't many Britishers that will say as much of the man that whipped them; so just set these lines down in the log, or it won't go for nothing.'

Shelley wrote some verses in the book, but not those he had quoted; and so we parted.

It was now time to return to Pisa. I never lost an opportunity of thus giving the dreamy bard glimpses of rough life. He disliked it, but could not resist my importunity. He had seen no more of the working-day world than a girl at a boarding school, and his habit of eternally brooding on his own thoughts, in solitude and silence, damaged his health of mind and body. Like many other over-sensitive people, he thought everybody shunned him, whereas it was he who stood aloof. To the few who sought his acquaintance, he was frank, cordial, and, if they appeared worthy, friendly in the extreme; but he shrank like a maiden from making the first advances. At the beginning of his literary life he believed all authors published their opinions, as he did his, from a deep conviction of their truth and importance, after due investigation. When a new work appeared on any subject that interested him, he would write to the authors expressing his opinion of their books, and giving his reasons for his judgment, always arguing logically, and not for display; and, with his serene and imperturbable temper, variety of knowledge, tenacious memory, command of language, or rather of all the

languages of literature, he was a most subtle critic; but, as authors are not the meekest or mildest of men, he occasionally met with rude rebuffs, and retired into his own shell.

In this way he became acquainted with Godwin, in early life; and in his first work, *Queen Mab*, or rather in the notes appended to that poem, the old philosopher's influence on the beardless boy is strongly marked. For publishing these notes Shelley was punished as the man is stated to have been who committed the first murder: 'every man's hand was against him'. Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and others he had either written to, corresponded with, or personally known; but in their literary guild he found little sympathy; their enthusiasm had burnt out whilst Shelley's had waxed stronger. Old Rothschild's sage maxim perhaps influenced them: 'Never connect yourself with an unlucky man'. However that may be, all intercourse had long ceased between Shelley and any of the literary fraternity of the day, with the exception of Peacock, Keats, Leigh Hunt, and the Brothers Smith, of the *Rejected Addresses*.

I will now return to our drive home from visiting the ships in the docks of Leghorn. Shelley was in high glee, and full of fun, as he generally was after these 'distractions', as he called them. The fact was his excessive mental labour impeded, if it did not paralyze, his bodily functions. When his mind was fixed on a subject his mental powers were strained to the utmost. If not writing, or sleeping, he was reading; he read, whilst eating, walking, or travelling—the last thing at night, and the first thing in the morning—not the ephemeral literature of the day, which requires little or no thought, but the works of the old sages, metaphysicians, logicians, and philosophers, of the Grecian and Roman poets, and of modern scientific men, so that anything that could diversify or relax his overstrained brain was of the utmost benefit to him. Now he talked of nothing but ships, sailors, and the sea; and, although he agreed with Johnson that a man who made a pun would pick a pocket, yet he made several in Greek, which he at least thought good, for he shrieked with laughter as he uttered them. Fearing his phil-Hellenism would end by making him serious, as it always did, I brought his mind back by repeating some lines of Sedley's, beginning:

Love still has something of the sea  
From whence his mother rose.

During the rest of our drive we had nothing but sea yarns. He regretted having wasted his life in Greek and Latin, instead

of learning the useful arts of swimming and sailing. He resolved to have a good-sized boat forthwith. I proposed we should form a colony at the Gulf of Spezzia, and I said: 'You get Byron to join us, and with your family and the Williams', and books, horses, and boats, undisturbed by the botherations of the world, we shall have all that reasonable people require'.

This scheme enchanted him. 'Well,' I said, 'propose this to Byron to-morrow'.

'No!' he answered, 'you must do that. Byron is always influenced by his last acquaintance. You are the last man, so do you pop the question.'

'I understand that feeling,' I observed. 'When well known neither men nor women realize our first conception of them, so we transfer our hopes to the new men or women who make a sign of sympathy, only to find them like those who have gone before, or worse.' I quoted his own lines as exemplifying my meaning:

Where is the beauty, love, and truth we seek,  
But in our minds!

## CHAPTER X

First our pleasures die—and then  
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when  
These are dead, the debt is due,  
Dust claims dust—and we die too.

SHELLEY.

THE following morning I told Byron our plan. Without any suggestion from me he eagerly volunteered to join us, and asked me to get a yacht built for him, and to look out for a house as near the sea as possible. I allowed some days to pass before I took any steps in order to see if his wayward mind would change. As he grew more urgent I wrote to an old naval friend, Captain Roberts, then staying at Genoa, a man peculiarly fitted to execute the order, and requested him to send plans and estimates of an open boat for Shelley, and a large decked one for Byron. Shortly after, Williams and I rode along the coast to the Gulf of Spezzia. Shelley had no pride or vanity to provide for, yet we had the greatest difficulty in finding any house in which the humblest civilized family could exist.

On the shores of this superb bay, only surpassed in its natural beauty and capability by that of Naples, so effectually has tyranny paralyzed the energies and enterprise of man, that the only indication of human habitation was a few most miserable fishing villages scattered along the margin of the bay. Near its centre, between the villages of Sant' Arenzo and Lerici, we came upon a lonely and abandoned building called the Villa Magni, though it looked more like a boat- or bathing-house than a place to live in. It consisted of a terrace or ground-floor unpaved, and used for storing boat-gear and fishing-tackle, and of a single story over it divided into a hall or saloon and four small rooms which had once been whitewashed; there was one chimney for cooking. This place we thought the Shelleys might put up with for the summer. The only good thing about it was a veranda facing the sea, and almost over it. So we sought the owner and made arrangements, dependent on Shelley's approval, for taking it for six months. As to finding a palazzo grand enough for a Milordo Inglese, within a reasonable distance of the bay, it was out of the question.

Williams returned to Pisa; I rode on to Genoa, and settled with Captain Roberts about building the boats. He had

already, with his usual activity, obtained permission to build them in the government dockyards, and had his plans and estimates made out. I need hardly say that though the captain was a great arithmetician, this estimate, like all the estimates as to time and cost that were ever made, was a mere delusion, which made Byron wroth, but did not ruffle Shelley's serenity.

On returning to Pisa I found the two poets going through the same routine of habits they had adopted before my departure; the one getting out of bed after noon, dawdling about until two or three, following the same road on horseback, stopping at the same podere, firing his pop-guns, and retracing his steps at the same slow pace—his frugal dinner followed by his accustomed visit to an Italian family, and then—the midnight lamp, and the immortal verses.

The other was up at six or seven, reading Plato, Sophocles, or Spinoza, with the accompaniment of a hunch of dry bread; then he joined Williams in a sail on the Arno, in a flat-bottomed skiff, book in hand, and from thence he went to the pine forest, or some out-of-the-way place. When the birds went to roost he returned home, and talked and read until midnight. The monotony of this life was only broken at long intervals by the arrival of some old acquaintances of Byron's: Rogers, Hobhouse, Moore, Scott—not Sir Walter—and these visits were brief. John Murray, the publisher, sent out new books, and wrote amusing gossiping letters, as did Tom Moore, and others. These we were generally allowed to read, or hear read, Byron archly observing: 'My private and confidential letters are better known than any of my published works'.

Shelley's boyish eagerness to possess the new toy, from which he anticipated never-failing pleasure in gliding over the azure seas, under the cloudless skies of an Italian summer, was pleasant to behold. His comrade Williams was inspired by the same spirit. We used to draw plans on the sands of the Arno of the exact dimensions of the boat, dividing her into compartments (the forepart was decked for stowage), and then, squatting down within the lines, I marked off the imaginary cabin. With a real chart of the Mediterranean spread out before them, and with faces as grave and anxious as those of Columbus and his companions, they held councils as to the islands to be visited, coasts explored, courses steered, the amount of armament, stores, water, and provisions which would be necessary. Then we would narrate instances of the daring of the old navigators, as when Diaz discovered the Cape of Good Hope in 1446, with



two vessels each of fifty tons burthen; or when Drake went round the world, one of his craft being only thirty tons; and of the extraordinary runs and enterprises accomplished in open boats of equal or less tonnage than the one we were building, from the earliest times to those of Commodore Bligh. Byron with the smile of a Mephistopheles standing by, asked me the amount of salvage we, the salvors, should be entitled to in the probable event of our picking up and towing Shelley's water-logged craft into port.

As the world spun round the sandy plains of Pisa became too hot to be agreeable, and the Shelleys, longing for the sea breezes, departed to their new abode. Byron could not muster energy enough to break through his dawdling habits, so he lingered on under the fair plea of seeing the Leigh Hunts settled in his ground-floor, which was prepared for them. I rode on to Genoa to hasten the completion and dispatch of the long-promised boat-flotilla. I found Captain Roberts had nearly finished Shelley's boat. Williams had brought with him, on leaving England, the section of a boat as a model to build from, designed by a naval officer, and the two friends had so often sat contemplating this toy, believing it to be a marvel of nautical architecture, that nothing would satisfy them but that their craft should be built exactly on the same lines. Roberts, and the builder at Genoa, not approving, protested against it. You might as well have attempted to persuade a young man after a season of boating, or hunting, that he was not a thorough seaman and sportsman; or a youngster flushed with honours from a university that he was not the wisest of men. Williams was on ordinary occasions as humble-minded as Shelley, but having been two or three years in the navy, and then in the cavalry, he thought there was no vanity in his believing that he was as good a judge of a boat or horse as any man. In these small conceits we are all fools at the beginning of life, until time, with his sledge hammer, has let the daylight into our brain-boxes; so the boat was built according to his cherished model. When it was finished, it took two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and then she was very crank in a breeze, though not deficient in beam. She was fast, strongly built, and Torbay rigged. I dispatched her under charge of two steady seamen, and a smart sailor lad, aged eighteen, named Charles Vivian. Shelley sent back the two sailors, and only retained the boy; they told me on their return to Genoa that they had been out in a rough night, that she was a ticklish boat to manage, but had sailed and worked well, and

with two good seamen she would do very well; and that they had cautioned the gents accordingly. I shortly after received the following letter from Shelley:

LERICI, May 16, 1822.

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

The *Don Juan* is arrived, and nothing can exceed the admiration she has excited; for we must suppose the name to have been given her during the equivocation of sex which her godfather suffered in the harem. Williams declares her to be perfect, and I participate in his enthusiasm, inasmuch as would be decent in a landsman. We have been out now several days, although we have sought in vain for an opportunity of trying her against the feluccas or other large craft in the bay; she passes the small ones as a comet might pass the dullest planet of the heavens. When do you expect to be here in the *Bolivar*. If Roberts's 50*l.* grow into a 500*l.*, and his ten days into months, I suppose I may expect that I am considerably in your debt, and that you will not be round here until the middle of the summer. I hope that I shall be mistaken in the last of these conclusions; as to the former, whatever may be the result, I have little reason and less inclination to complain of my bargain. I wish you could express from me to Roberts, how excessively I am obliged to him for the time and trouble he has expended for my advantage, and which I wish could be as easily repaid as the money which I owe him, and which I wait your orders for remitting.

I have only heard from Lord Byron once, and solely upon that subject. Tita is with me, and I suppose will go with you in the schooner to Leghorn. We are very impatient to see you, and although we cannot hope that you will stay long on your *first* visit, we count upon you for the latter part of the summer, as soon as the novelty of Leghorn is blunted. Mary desires her best regards to you, and unites with me in a sincere wish to renew an intimacy from which we have already experienced so much pleasure.

Believe me, my dear Trelawny,

Your very sincere friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

LERICI, June 18, 1822.

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

I have written to Guelhard, to pay you 154 Tuscan crowns, the amount of the balance against me according to Roberts's calculation, which I keep for your satisfaction, deducting sixty, which I paid the aubergiste at Pisa, in all 214. We saw you about eight miles in the offing this morning; but the abatement of the breeze leaves us little hope that you can have made Leghorn this evening. Pray write us a full, true, and particular account of your proceedings, etc.—How Lord Byron likes the vessel; what are your arrangements and intentions for the summer; and when we may expect to see you or him in this region again; and especially whether there is any news of Hunt.

Roberts and Williams are very busy in refitting the *Don Juan*, they seem determined that she shall enter Leghorn in style. I am no great judge of these matters; but am excessively obliged to the

former, and delighted that the latter should find amusement, like the sparrow, in educating the cuckoo's young.

You, of course, enter into society at Leghorn: should you meet with any scientific person, capable of preparing the *Prussic Acid*, or *essential oil of bitter almonds*, I should regard it as a great kindness if you could procure me a small quantity. It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated; I would give any price for this medicine; you remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it; my wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present, but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest. *The Prussic Acid* is used in medicine in infinitely minute doses; but that preparation is weak, and has not the concentration necessary to medicine all ills infallibly. A single drop, even less, is a dose, and it acts by paralysis.

I am curious to hear of this publication about Lord Byron and the Pisa circle. I hope it will not annoy him, as to me I am supremely indifferent. If you have not shown the letter I sent you, don't, until Hunt's arrival, when we shall certainly meet.

Your very sincere friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Mary is better, though still excessively weak.

Not long after I followed in Byron's boat, the *Bolivar* schooner. There was no fault to find with her, Roberts and the builder had fashioned her after their own fancy, and she was both fast and safe. I manned her with five able seamen, four Genoese and one Englishman. I put into the Gulf of Spezzia, and found Shelley in ecstasy with his boat, and Williams as touchy about her reputation as if she had been his wife. They were hardly ever out of her, and talked of the Mediterranean as a lake too confined and tranquil to exhibit her seagoing excellence. They longed to be on the broad Atlantic, scudding under bare poles in a heavy sou'wester, with plenty of sea room. I went out for a sail in Shelley's boat to see how they would manage her. It was great fun to witness Williams teaching the poet how to steer, and other points of seamanship. As usual, Shelley had a book in hand, saying he could read and steer at the same time, as one was mental the other mechanical.

'Luff!' said Williams.

Shelley put the helm the wrong way. Williams corrected him.

'Do you see those two white objects ahead? keep them in a line, the wind is heading us.' Then, turning to me, he said: 'Lend me a hand to haul in the main-sheet, and I will show you how close she can lay to the wind to work off a lee-shore'.

'No,' I answered, 'I am a passenger, and won't touch a rope.'

'Luff,' said Williams, as the boat was yawing about. 'Shelley, you can't steer, you have got her in the wind's eye; give me the tiller and you attend the main-sheet. Ready about!' said Williams. 'Helms down—let go the fore-sheet—see how she spins round on her heel—is not she a beauty? Now, Shelley, let go the main-sheet, and boy, haul aft the jib-sheet!'

The main-sheet was jammed, and the boat unmanageable, or as sailors express it, in irons; when the two had cleared it Shelley's hat was knocked overboard, and he would probably have followed, if I had not held him. He was so uncommonly awkward, that when they had things shipshape, Williams, somewhat scandalized at the lubberly manœuvre, blew up the poet for his neglect and inattention to orders. Shelley was, however, so happy and in such high glee, and the nautical terms so tickled his fancy, that he even put his beloved Plato in his pocket, and gave his mind up to fun and frolic.

'You will do no good with Shelley,' I said, 'until you heave his books and papers overboard; shear the wisps of hair that hang over his eyes; and plunge his arms up to the elbows in a tar-bucket. And you, captain, will have no authority until you drowse your frock coat and cavalry boots. You see I am stripped for a swim, so please, whilst I am on board, to keep within swimming distance of the land.'

The boy was quick and handy, and used to boats. Williams was not as deficient as I anticipated, but over-anxious and wanted practice, which alone makes a man prompt in emergency. Shelley was intent on catching images from the everchanging sea and sky, he heeded not the boat. On my suggesting the addition to their crew of a Genoese sailor accustomed to the coast—such as I had on board the *Bolivar*—Williams, thinking I under-valued his efficiency as a seaman, was scandalized—'as if we three seasoned salts were not enough to manage an open boat, when lubberly sloops and cutters of fifty or sixty tons were worked by as few men on the rough seas and iron-bound coast of Scotland!'

'Yes,' I answered, 'but what a difference between those sea-lions and you and our water-poet! A decked cutter besides, or even a frigate is easier handled in a gale or squall, and out-and-out safer to be on board of than an open boat. If we had been in a squall to-day with the main-sheet jammed, and the tiller put starboard instead of port, we should have had to swim for it.'

'Not I: I should have gone down with the rest of the pigs in

the bottom of the boat,' said Shelley, meaning the pig-iron ballast.

When I took my departure for Leghorn on board the *Bolivar* they accompanied me out of the bay, and then we parted. I arrived at Leghorn the same night. I found my Lord Inglese had at last mustered sufficient energy to move from Pisa to Monte Nero, near Leghorn; I condoled with him on the change, for his new flimsy-built villa—not unlike the suburban verandaed cockney boxes on the Thames—was ten times hotter than the old palace he had left, with its cool marble halls, and arched and lofty floors that defied the sun. He was satisfied with his boat, but by no means with its cost; he took little interest in her, and I could not induce him to take a cruise; he always had some excuse. The first time he came on board he said in answer to something I pointed out in the rigging:

'People think I must be a bit of a sailor from my writings. All the sea-terms I use are from authority, and they cost me time, toil, and trouble to look them out; but you will find me a land-lubber. I hardly know the stem from the stern, and don't know the name or use of a single rope or sail; I know the deep sea is blue, and not green, as that greenhorn Shakespeare always calls it.'

This was literally true; in regard to Byron, he neither knew nor cared to know, nor ever asked a question (except when writing) about sea-terms or sea-life.

Towards the end of June 1822 the long-expected family of the Hunts arrived by sea from England.

Byron observed: 'You will find Leigh Hunt a gentleman in dress and address'.

I found him that, and something more; and with a quaint fancy and cultivated mind. He was in high spirits, and disposed to be pleased with others. His anticipated literary projects in conjunction with Byron and Shelley were a source of great pleasure to him—so was the land of beauty and song. He had come to it as to a new home, in which as the immortal Robins would have said: 'You will find no nuisance but the litter of the rose-leaves and the noise of the nightingales'. The pleasure that surpassed all the rest was the anticipation of seeing speedily his friend Shelley. But alas! all those things which seemed so certain:

Those juggling fiends  
That keep the word of promise to our ear,  
And break it to our hope,

so kept—and so broke—it with Leigh Hunt.

## CHAPTER XI

What is life, what is death,  
What are we? that when the ship sinks  
We no longer may be.

SHELLEY.

SHELLEY, with his friend Williams, soon came in their boat, scudding into the harbour of Leghorn. They went with the Hunts to Pisa, and established them in Lord Byron's palace, Shelley having furnished a floor there for them. In a few days Shelley returned to Leghorn, and found Williams eager to be off. We had a sail outside the port in the two boats. Shelley was in a mournful mood; his mind depressed by a recent interview with Byron.

Byron, at first, had been more eager than Shelley for Leigh Hunt's arrival in Italy to edit and contribute to the proposed new Review, and so continued until his English correspondents had worked on his fears. They did not oppose, for they knew his temper too well, but artfully insinuated that he was jeopardizing his fame and fortune, etc. Shelley found Byron so irritable, so shuffling and equivocating, whilst talking with him on the fulfilment of his promise with regard to Leigh Hunt—that, but for imperilling Hunt's prospects, Shelley's intercourse with Byron would then have abruptly terminated; it was doomed to be their last meeting.

On Saturday, the 6th, Williams wrote the following letter to his wife at the Villa Magni:

I have just left the quay, my dearest girl, and the wind blows right across to Spezzia, which adds to the vexation I feel at being unable to leave this place. For my own part, I should have been with you in all probability on Wednesday evening, but I have been kept day after day, waiting for Shelley's definitive arrangements with Lord B. relative to poor Hunt, whom, in my opinion, he has treated vilely. A letter from Mary, of the most gloomy kind, reached S. yesterday, and this mood of hers aggravated my uneasiness to see you; for I am proud, dear girl, beyond words to express, in the conviction, that *wherever* we may be together you could be cheerful and contented.

Would I could take the present gale by the wings and reach you to-night; hard as it blows, I would venture across for *such* a reward. However, to-morrow something decisive shall take place; and if I

am detained, I shall depart in a felucca, and leave the boat to be brought round in company with Trelawny in the *Bolivar*. He talks of visiting Spezzia again in a few days. I am tired to death of waiting—this is our longest separation, and seems a year to me. Absence alone is enough to make me anxious, and indeed, unhappy, but I think if I had left you in our own house in solitude, I should feel it less than I do now. What can I do? Poor S. desires that I should return to you, but I know secretly wishes me not to leave him in the lurch. He too, by his manner, is as anxious to see you almost as I could be, but the interests of poor H. keep him here—in fact, with Lord B. it appears they cannot do anything—who actually said as much as that he did not wish (?) his name to be attached to the work, and of course to theirs.

In Lord Byron's family all is confusion—the cut-throats he is so desirous to have about him, have involved him in a second row; and although the present banishment of the Gambas from Tuscany is attributed to the first affair of the dragoon, the continued disturbances among his and their servants is, I am sure, the principal cause for its being carried into immediate effect. Four days (commencing from the day of our arrival in Leghorn) were only given them to find another retreat; and as Lord B. considers this a personal, though tacit attack upon himself, he chooses to follow their fortunes in another country. Genoa was first selected—of that government they could have no hope—Geneva was then proposed, and this proved as bad if not worse. Lucca is now the choice, and Trelawny was dispatched last night to feel their way with the governor, to whom he carried letters. All this time Hunt is shuffled off from day to day, and now, heaven knows, when or how it will end.

Lord B.'s reception of Mrs. H. was—as S. tells me—most shameful. She came into his house sick and exhausted, and he scarcely deigned to notice her; was silent, and scarcely bowed. This conduct cut H. to the soul; but the way in which he received our friend Roberts, at Dunn's door, shall be described when we meet—it must be acted. How I long to see you: I had written *when*, but I will make no promises, for I too well know how distressing it is to both of us to break them. Tuesday evening at furthest, unless kept by the weather, I will say: 'Oh, Jane! how fervently I press you and our little ones to my heart'.

Adieu! Take body and soul: for you are at once my heaven and earth—that is all I ask of both.

E. ELK. W——.

S. is at Pisa, and will write to-night to me.

The last entry in Williams's Journal is dated 4 July 1822, Leghorn.

'Processions of priests and religiosi have been for several days past praying for rain: but the gods are either angry, or nature too powerful.'

The affair of the dragoon alluded to in Williams's letter, as connected with the Gambas was this: As Byron and his

companions were returning to Pisa on horseback, the road being blocked up by the party—a serjeant-major on duty in their rear trotted his horse through the cavalcade. One of the awkward literary squad—a resolute bore, but timid rider—was nearly spilt, from his nag shying. To divert the jeers from his own bad riding he appealed pathetically to Byron, saying:

‘Shall we endure this man’s insolence?’

Byron said: ‘No, we will bring him to an account’; and instantly galloped after the dragoon into Pisa, his party following. The guard at the gate turned out with drawn swords, but could not stop them. Some of the servants of Byron and the Gambas were idling on the steps of his palace; getting a glimpse of the row, one of them armed himself with a stable-fork, rushed at the dragoon as he passed Byron’s palace, and wounded him severely in the side. This scene was acted in broad daylight on the Lung’ Arno, the most public place in the city, scores of people looking on! yet the police, with their host of spies and backed by the power of a despotic government, could never ascertain who struck the blow.

Not liking to meddle with the poet they imprisoned two of his servants, and exiled the family of Count Gamba. Byron chose to follow them. Such is the hatred of the Italians to their rulers and all who have authority over them, that the blind beggars at the corners of the streets—no others are permitted to beg in Tuscany—hearing that the English were without arms, sidled up to some of them, adroitly putting into their hands formidable stilettos, which they had concealed in the sleeves of their ragged gaberdines.

Shelley wrote me the following note about the dragoon.

MY DEAR T.,

Gamba is with me, and we are drawing up a paper demanded of us by the police. Mary tells me that you have an account from Lord Byron of the affair, and we wish to see it before ours is concluded. The man is severely wounded in the side, and his life is supposed to be in danger from the weapon having grazed the liver. It were as well if you could come here, as we shall decide on no statement without you.

Ever yours truly,

SHELLEY.

Mrs. Shelley, writing an account of the row, says:

Madame G. and I happened to be in the carriage, ten paces behind, and saw the whole. Taaffe kept at a safe distance during the fray, but fearing the consequence, he wrote such a report that Lord



Byron quarrelled with him; and what between insolence and abject humility he has kept himself in hot water, when, in fact, he had nothing to fear.

On Monday, 8 July 1822, I went with Shelley to his bankers, and then to a store. It was past one p.m. when we went on board our respective boats—Shelley and Williams to return to their home in the Gulf of Spezzia; I in the *Bolivar* to accompany them into the offing. When we were under weigh, the guard-boat boarded us to overhaul our papers. I had not got my port clearance, the captain of the port having refused to give it to the mate, as I had often gone out without. The officer of the Health Office consequently threatened me with forty days' quarantine. It was hopeless to think of detaining my friends. Williams had been for days fretting and fuming to be off; they had no time to spare, it was past two o'clock, and there was very little wind.

Suddenly and reluctantly I re-anchored, furled my sails, and with a ship's glass watched the progress of my friend's boat. My Genoese mate observed: 'They should have sailed this morning at three or four a.m., instead of three p.m. They are standing too much in shore; the current will set them there'.

I said: 'They will soon have the land breeze'.

'May be,' continued the mate, 'she will soon have too much breeze; that gaff top-sail is foolish in a boat with no deck and no sailor on board.' Then pointing to the S.W.: 'Look at those black lines and the dirty rags hanging on them out of the sky—they are a warning; look at the smoke on the water; the devil is brewing mischief'.

There was a sea-fog, in which Shelley's boat was soon after enveloped, and we saw nothing more of her.

Although the sun was obscured by mists, it was oppressively sultry. There was not a breath of air in the harbour. The heaviness of the atmosphere and an unwonted stillness benumbed my senses. I went down into the cabin and sank into a slumber. I was roused up by a noise overhead, and went on deck. The men were getting up a chain cable to let go another anchor. There was a general stir amongst the shipping; shifting berths, getting down yards and masts, veering out cables, hauling in of hawsers, letting go anchors, hailing from the ships and quays, boats sculling rapidly to and fro. It was almost dark, although only half-past six o'clock. The sea was of the colour, and looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it, and big

drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding, as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds, coming upon us from the sea. Fishing craft and coasting vessels under bare poles rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and hubbub was that made by men, but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of a thunder squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind, and rain. When the fury of the storm, which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat, amongst the many small craft scattered about. I watched every speck that loomed on the horizon, thinking that they would have borne up on their return to the port, as all the other boats that had gone out in the same direction had done.

I sent our Genoese mate on board some of the returning craft to make inquiries, but they all professed not to have seen the English boat. So remorselessly are the quarantine laws enforced in Italy that, when at sea, if you render assistance to a vessel in distress, or rescue a drowning stranger, on returning to port you are condemned to a long and rigorous quarantine of fourteen or more days. The consequence is, should one vessel see another in peril, or even run it down by accident, she hastens on her course, and by general accord not a word is said or reported on the subject. But to resume my tale. I did not leave the *Bolivar* until dark. During the night it was gusty and showery, and the lightning flashed along the coast: at daylight I returned on board, and resumed my examination of the crews of the various boats which had returned to the port during the night. They either knew nothing, or would say nothing. My Genoese, with the quick eye of a sailor, pointed out, on board a fishing-boat, an English-made oar, that he thought he had seen in Shelley's boat, but the entire crew swore by all the saints in the calendar that this was not so. Another day was passed in horrid suspense. On the morning of the third day I rode to Pisa. Byron had returned to the Lanfranchi Palace. I hoped to find a letter from the Villa Magni: there was none. I told my fears to Hunt, and then went upstairs to Byron. When I told him his lip quivered, and his voice faltered as he questioned me. I sent a courier to Leghorn to dispatch the *Bolivar*, to cruise along the coast, whilst I mounted my horse and rode in the same direction. I also dispatched a courier along the coast to

go as far as Nice. On my arrival at Via Reggio I heard that a punt, a water-keg, and some bottles had been found on the beach. These things I recognized as having been in Shelley's boat when he left Leghorn. Nothing more was found for seven or eight days, during which time of painful suspense I patrolled the coast with the coastguard, stimulating them to keep a good lookout by the promise of a reward. It was not until many days after this that my worst fears were confirmed. Two bodies were found on the shore—one near Via Reggio, which I went and examined. The face and hands, and parts of the body not protected by the dress, were fleshless. The tall slight figure, the jacket, the volume of Sophocles in one pocket, and Keats's poems in the other, doubled back, as if the reader, in the act of reading, had hastily thrust it away, were all too familiar to me to leave a doubt on my mind that this mutilated corpse was any other than Shelley's. The other body was washed on shore three miles distant from Shelley's, near the tower of Migliarino, at the Bocca Lericcio. I went there at once. This corpse was much more mutilated; it had no other covering than—the shreds of a shirt, and that partly drawn over the head, as if the wearer had been in the act of taking it off—a black silk handkerchief, tied sailor-fashion around the neck—socks—and one boot, indicating also that he had attempted to strip. The flesh, sinews, and muscles hung about in rags, like the shirt, exposing the ribs and bones. I had brought with me from Shelley's house a boot of Williams's, and this exactly matched the one the corpse had on. That, and the handkerchief, satisfied me that it was the body of Shelley's comrade. Williams was the only one of the three who could swim, and it is probable he was the last survivor. It is likewise possible, as he had a watch and money, and was better dressed than the others, that his body might have been plundered when found. Shelley always declared that in case of wreck he would vanish instantly, and not imperil valuable lives by permitting others to aid in saving his, which he looked upon as valueless. It was not until three weeks after the wreck of the boat that a third body was found—four miles from the other two. This I concluded to be that of the sailor boy, Charles Vivian, although it was a mere skeleton, and impossible to be identified. It was buried in the sand, above the reach of the waves. I mounted my horse, and rode to the Gulf of Spezzia, put up my horse, and walked until I caught sight of the lone house on the seashore in which Shelley and Williams had dwelt, and where their widows still lived. Hitherto in my frequent

visits—in the absence of direct evidence to the contrary—I had buoyed up their spirits by maintaining that it was not impossible but that the friends still lived; now I had to extinguish the last hope of these forlorn women. I had ridden fast, to prevent any ruder messenger from bursting in upon them. As I stood on the threshold of their house, the bearer, or rather confirmer, of news which would rack every fibre of their quivering frames to the utmost, I paused, and, looking at the sea, my memory reverted to our joyous parting only a few days before.

The two families then had all been in the veranda, overhanging a sea so clear and calm that every star was reflected on the water, as if it had been a mirror; the young mothers singing some merry tune, with the accompaniment of a guitar. Shelley's shrill laugh—I heard it still—rang in my ears, with Williams's friendly hail, the general *buona notte* of all the joyous party, and the earnest entreaty to me to return as soon as possible, and not to forget the commissions they had severally given me. I was in a small boat beneath them, slowly rowing myself on board the *Bolivar*, at anchor in the bay, loath to part from what I verily believed to have been at that time the most united, and happiest, set of human beings in the whole world. And now by the blow of an idle puff of wind the scene was changed. Such is human happiness.

My reverie was broken by a shriek from the nurse Caterina, as, crossing the hall, she saw me in the doorway. After asking her a few questions, I went up the stairs, and, unannounced, entered the room. I neither spoke, nor did they question me. Mrs. Shelley's large grey eyes were fixed on my face. I turned away. Unable to bear this horrid silence, with a convulsive effort she exclaimed:

'Is there no hope?'

I did not answer, but left the room, and sent the servant with the children to them. The next day I prevailed on them to return with me to Pisa. The misery of that night and the journey of the next day, and of many days and nights that followed, I can neither describe nor forget. It was ultimately determined by those most interested, that Shelley's remains should be removed from where they lay, and conveyed to Rome, to be interred near the bodies of his child, and of his friend Keats, with a suitable monument, and that Williams's remains should be taken to England. To do this, in their then far advanced state of decomposition, and to obviate the obstacles offered by the quarantine laws, the ancient custom of burning

and reducing the body to ashes was suggested. I wrote to our minister at Florence, Dawkins, on the subject, and solicited his friendly intercession with the Lucchese and Florentine governments, that I might be furnished with authority to accomplish our purpose.

The following was his answer:

DEAR SIR,

An order was sent yesterday from hence to the Governor of Via Reggio, to deliver up the remains of Mr. Shelley to you, or any person empowered by you to receive them.

I said they were to be removed to Leghorn for interment, but that need not bind you. If they go by sea, the governor will give you the papers necessary to insure their admittance elsewhere. If they travel by land, they must be accompanied by a guard as far as the frontier—a precaution always taken to prevent the possibility of infection. Quicklime has been thrown into the graves, as is usual in similar cases.

With respect to the removal of the other corpse, I can tell you nothing till I hear from Florence. I applied for the order as soon as I received your letter, and I expect an answer to my letter by to-morrow's post.

I am very sensible of Lord Byron's kindness, and should have called upon him when I passed through Pisa, had he been anybody but Lord Byron. Do not mention trouble; I am here to take as much as my countrymen think proper to give me; and all I ask in return is fair play and good humour, which I am sure I shall always find in the S. S. S.

Believe me, dear Sir,

Yours very faithfully,

W. DAWKINS.

Such were his subsequent influence and energy, that he ultimately overcame all the obstacles and repugnance of the Italians to sanction such an unprecedented proceeding in their territories.

## CHAPTER XII

All things that we love and cherish,  
Like ourselves, must fade and perish;  
Such is our rude mortal lot,  
Love itself would, did they not.

SHELLEY.

I GOT a furnace made at Leghorn, of iron bars and strong sheet-iron, supported on a stand, and laid in a stock of fuel, and such things as were said to be used by Shelley's much loved Hellenes on their funeral pyres.

On 13 August 1822 I went on board the *Bolivar*, with an English acquaintance, having written to Byron and Hunt to say I would send them word when everything was ready, as they wished to be present. I had previously engaged two large feluccas, with drags and tackling, to go before, and endeavour to find the place where Shelley's boat had foundered; the captain of one of the feluccas having asserted that he was out in the fatal squall, and had seen Shelley's boat go down off Via Reggio, with all sail set. With light and fitful breezes we were eleven hours reaching our destination—the tower of Migliarino, at the Bocca Lericcio, in the Tuscan States. There was a village there, and about two miles from that place Williams was buried. So I anchored, landed, called on the officer in command, a major, and told him my object in coming, of which he was already apprised by his own government. He assured me I should have every aid from him. As it was too late in the day to commence operations, we went to the only inn in the place, and I wrote to Byron to be with us next day at noon. The major sent my letter to Pisa by a dragoon, and made arrangements for the next day. In the morning he was with us early, and gave me a note from Byron, to say he would join us as near noon as he could. At ten we went on board the commandant's boat, with a squad of soldiers in working dresses, armed with mattocks and spades, an officer of the quarantine service, and some of his crew. They had their peculiar tools, so fashioned as to do their work without coming into personal contact with things that might be infectious—long handled tongs, nippers, poles with iron hooks and

spikes, and divers others that gave one a lively idea of the implements of torture devised by the holy inquisitors. Thus freighted we started, my own boat following with the furnace, and the things I had brought from Leghorn. We pulled along the shore for some distance, and landed at a line of strong posts and railings which projected into the sea—forming the boundary dividing the Tuscan and Lucchese States. We walked along the shore to the grave, where Byron and Hunt soon joined us; they, too, had an officer and soldiers from the tower of Migliarino, an officer of the Health Office, and some dismounted dragoons, so we were surrounded by soldiers, but they kept the ground clear, and readily lent their aid. There was a considerable gathering of spectators from the neighbourhood, and many ladies richly dressed were amongst them. The spot where the body lay was marked by the gnarled root of a pine tree.

A rude hut, built of young pine-tree stems, and wattled with their branches, to keep the sun and rain out, and thatched with reeds, stood on the beach to shelter the lookout man on duty. A few yards from this was the grave, which we commenced opening—the Gulf of Spezzia and Leghorn at equal distances of twenty-two miles from us. As to fuel I might have saved myself the trouble of bringing any, for there was an ample supply of broken spars and planks cast on the shore from wrecks, besides the fallen and decaying timber in a stunted pine forest close at hand. The soldiers collected fuel whilst I erected the furnace, and then the men of the Health Office set to work, shovelling away the sand which covered the body, while we gathered round, watching anxiously. The first indication of their having found the body was the appearance of the end of a black silk handkerchief—I grubbed this out with a stick, for we were not allowed to touch anything with our hands—then some shreds of linen were met with, and a boot with the bone of the leg and the foot in it. On the removal of a layer of brushwood all that now remained of my lost friend was exposed—a shapeless mass of bones and flesh. The limbs separated from the trunk on being touched.

‘Is that a human body?’ exclaimed Byron; ‘why it’s more like the carcase of a sheep, or any other animal, than a man: this is a satire on our pride and folly.’

I pointed to the letters E. E. W. on the black silk handkerchief.

Byron, looking on, muttered: ‘The entrails of a worm hold together longer than the potter’s clay, of which man is made. Hold! let me see the jaw,’ he added, as they were removing the

skull, 'I can recognize any one by the teeth, with whom I have talked. I always watch the lips and mouth: they tell what the tongue and eyes try to conceal'.

I had a boot of Williams's with me; it exactly corresponded with the one found in the grave. The remains were removed piecemeal into the furnace.

'Don't repeat this with me,' said Byron; 'let my carcase rot where it falls.'

The funereal pyre was now ready; I applied the fire, and the materials being dry and resinous the pine-wood burnt furiously, and drove us back. It was hot enough before, there was no breath of air, and the loose sand scorched our feet. As soon as the flames became clear, and allowed us to approach, we threw frankincense and salt into the furnace, and poured a flask of wine and oil over the body. The Greek oration was omitted, for we had lost our Hellenic bard. It was now so insufferably hot that the officers and soldiers were all seeking shade.

'Let us try the strength of these waters that drowned our friends,' said Byron, with his usual audacity. 'How far out do you think they were when their boat sank?'

'If you don't wish to be put into the furnace, you had better not try; you are not in condition.'

He stripped, and went into the water, and so did I and my companion. Before we got a mile out Byron was sick, and persuaded to return to the shore. My companion, too, was seized with cramp, and reached the land by my aid. At four o'clock the funereal pyre burnt low, and when we uncovered the furnace nothing remained in it but dark-coloured ashes, with fragments of the larger bones. Poles were now put under the red-hot furnace, and it was gradually cooled in the sea. I gathered together the human ashes, and placed them in a small oak box, bearing an inscription on a brass plate, screwed it down, and placed it in Byron's carriage. He returned with Hunt to Pisa, promising to be with us on the following day at Via Reggio. I returned with my party in the same way we came, and supped and slept at the inn. On the following morning we went on board the same boats, with the same things and party, and rowed down the little river near Via Reggio to the sea, pulled along the coast towards Massa, then landed, and began our preparations as before.

Three white wands had been stuck in the sand to mark the poet's grave, but as they were at some distance from each other,



we had to cut a trench thirty yards in length, in the line of the sticks, to ascertain the exact spot, and it was nearly an hour before we came upon the grave.

In the meantime Byron and Leigh Hunt arrived in the carriage, attended by soldiers, and the Health Officer, as before. The lonely and grand scenery that surrounded us so exactly harmonized with Shelley's genius, that I could imagine his spirit soaring over us. The sea, with the islands of Gorgona, Capraji, and Elba, was before us; old battlemented watch-towers stretched along the coast, backed by the marble-crested Apennines glistening in the sun, picturesque from their diversified outlines, and not a human dwelling was in sight. As I thought of the delight Shelley felt in such scenes of loneliness and grandeur whilst living, I felt we were no better than a herd of wolves or a pack of wild dogs, in tearing out his battered and naked body from the pure yellow sand that lay so lightly over it, to drag him back to the light of day; but the dead have no voice, nor had I power to check the sacrilege—the work went on silently in the deep and unresisting sand, not a word was spoken, for the Italians have a touch of sentiment, and their feelings are easily excited into sympathy. Even Byron was silent and thoughtful. We were startled and drawn together by a dull hollow sound that followed the blow of a mattock; the iron had struck a skull, and the body was soon uncovered. Lime had been strewn on it; this, or decomposition, had the effect of staining it of a dark and ghastly indigo colour. Byron asked me to preserve the skull for him; but remembering that he had formerly used one as a drinking-cup, I was determined Shelley's should not be so profaned. The limbs did not separate from the trunk, as in the case of Williams's body, so that the corpse was removed entire into the furnace. I had taken the precaution of having more and larger pieces of timber, in consequence of my experience of the day before of the difficulty of consuming a corpse in the open air with our apparatus. After the fire was well kindled we repeated the ceremony of the previous day; and more wine was poured over Shelley's dead body than he had consumed during his life. This with the oil and salt made the yellow flames glisten and quiver. The heat from the sun and fire was so intense that the atmosphere was tremulous and wavy. The corpse fell open and the heart was laid bare. The frontal bone of the skull, where it had been struck with the mattock, fell off; and, as the back of the head rested on the red-hot bottom bars of the furnace, the brains

literally seethed, bubbled, and boiled as in a cauldron, for a very long time.

Byron could not face this scene, he withdrew to the beach and swam off to the *Bolívar*. Leigh Hunt remained in the carriage. The fire was so fierce as to produce a white heat on the iron, and to reduce its contents to grey ashes. The only portions that were not consumed were some fragments of bones, the jaw, and the skull, but what surprised us all was that the heart remained entire. In snatching this relic from the fiery furnace my hand was severely burnt; and had any one seen me do the act I should have been put into quarantine.

After cooling the iron machine in the sea I collected the human ashes, and placed them in a box, which I took on board the *Bolívar*. Byron and Hunt retraced their steps to their home, and the officers and soldiers returned to their quarters. I liberally rewarded the men for the admirable manner in which they behaved during the two days they had been with us.

As I undertook and executed this novel ceremony, I have been thus tediously minute in describing it.

Byron's idle talk during the exhumation of Williams's remains did not proceed from want of feeling, but from his anxiety to conceal what he felt from others. When confined to his bed and racked by spasms, which threatened his life, I have heard him talk in a much more unorthodox fashion, the instant he could muster breath to banter. He had been taught during his town life, that any exhibition of sympathy or feeling was maudlin and unmanly, and that the appearance of daring and indifference denoted blood and high breeding.

## CHAPTER XIII

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,—  
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow  
Through public scorn—mud from a muddy spring,—  
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,  
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,  
Till they drop blind in blood.

*England in 1819—SHELLEY.*

WHEN I arrived at Leghorn, as I could not immediately go on to Rome, I consigned Shelley's ashes to our consul at Rome, Mr. Freeborn, requesting him to keep them in his custody until my arrival. When I reached Rome Freeborn told me that to quiet the authorities there he had been obliged to inter the ashes with the usual ceremonies in the Protestant burying-place. When I came to examine the ground with the man who had the custody of it I found Shelley's grave amidst a cluster of others. The old Roman wall partly enclosed the place, and there was a niche in the wall formed by two buttresses—immediately under an ancient pyramid, said to be the tomb of Caius Cestius. There were no graves near it at that time. This suited my taste, so I purchased the recess, and sufficient space for planting a row of the Italian upright cypresses. As the souls of heretics are foredoomed by the Roman priests, they do not affect to trouble themselves about their bodies. There was no 'faculty' to apply for, nor bishop's licence to exhume the body. The custode or guardian who dwelt within the enclosure and had the key of the gate seemed to have uncontrolled power within his domain, and *scudi* impressed with the image of Saint Peter with the two keys, ruled him. Without more ado, masons were hired, and two tombs built in the recess. In one of these, when completed, I deposited the box, with Shelley's ashes, and covered it in with solid stone, inscribed with a Latin epitaph, written by Leigh Hunt. I received the following note at Leghorn previous to burning the body:

*PISA, 1st August, 1822.*

DEAR TRELAWNY,

You will of course call upon us in your way to your melancholy task; but I write to say, that you must not reckon upon passing through Pisa in a very great hurry, as the ladies particularly wish to

have an evening, while you are here, for consulting further with us; and I myself mean, at all events, to accompany you on your journey, if you have no objection.

I subjoin the inscriptions—mere matter-of-fact memorandums—according to the wish of the ladies. It will be for the other inscriptions to say more.

Yours sincerely,

LEIGH HUNT.

P.S. Mrs. Shelley wishes very much that Capt. Roberts would be kind enough to write to his uncle about her desk, begging it to be forwarded as speedily as possible. If it is necessary to be opened, the best way will be to buy a key for that purpose; but if a key is not to be had, of course it must be broken open. As there is something in the secret drawers, it will be extremely desirable that as few persons meddle with it as possible.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, ANGLUS, ORAM ETRUSCAM LEGENS IN NAVIGIOLO INTER LIGURNUM PORTUM ET VIAM REGIAM, PROCELLÂ PERIIT VIII. NON. JUL. MDCCCXXII. ÆTAT. SUÆ XXX.

EDVARDUS ELLERKER WILLIAMS, ANGLICÂ STIRPE ORTUS, INDIA ORIENTALI NATUS, A LIGURNO PORTU IN VIAM REGIAM NAVIGIOLO PROFICISCENS, TEMPESTATE PERIIT VIII. NON. JUL. MDCCCXXII. ÆTAT. SUÆ XXX.

Io, sottosbitta, prego le Autorità di Via Reggio o Livorno di consegnare al Signore Odoardo Trelawny, Inglese, la Barca nominata Il Don Juan, e tutta la sua carica, appartenente al mio marito, per essere alla sua disposizione.

MARIA SHELLEY.

Genova, 16 Setibre. 1822.

To which I added three lines from Shelley's favourite play, *The Tempest*:

Nothing of him that doth fade,  
But doth suffer a sea change  
Into something rich and strange.

The other tomb built merely to fill up the recess, was likewise covered in the same way—but blank without as within. I planted eight seedling cypresses. When I last saw them, in 1844, the seven which remained were about thirty-five feet in height. I added flowers as well. The ground I had purchased I enclosed, and so ended my task.

Shelley came of a long-lived race, and, barring accidents, there was no reason why he should not have emulated his forefathers in attaining a ripe age. He had no other complaint than occasional spasms, and these were probably caused by the excessive and almost unremitting strain on his mental powers, the solitude of his life, and his long fasts, which were not inten-

tional, but proceeded from the abstraction and forgetfulness of himself and his wife. If food was near him, he ate it—if not, he fasted, and it was after long fasts that he suffered from spasms. He was tall, slim, and bent from eternally poring over books; this habit had contracted his chest. His limbs were well proportioned, strong and bony—his head was very small—and his features were expressive of great sensibility, and decidedly feminine. There was nothing about him outwardly to attract notice, except his extraordinarily juvenile appearance. At twenty-nine he still retained on his tanned and freckled cheeks the fresh look of a boy—although his long wild locks were coming into blossom, as a polite hairdresser once said to me whilst cutting mine.

It was not until he spoke that you could discern anything uncommon in him—but the first sentence he uttered, when excited by his subject, riveted your attention. The light from his very soul streamed from his eyes, and every mental emotion of which the human mind is susceptible was expressed in his pliant and ever-changing features. He left the conviction on the minds of his audience, that however great he was as a poet, he was greater as an orator. There was another and most rare peculiarity in Shelley—his intellectual faculties completely mastered his material nature, and hence he unhesitatingly acted up to his own theories, if they only demanded sacrifices on his part—it was where they implicated others that he forebore. Mrs. Shelley has observed: 'Many have suggested and advocated far greater innovations in our political and social system than Shelley; but he alone practised those he approved of as just'.

Godwin observed to me, 'that Byron must occasionally have said good things, though not capable, as Shelley was, of keeping up a long conversation or argument; and that Shelley must have been of great use to Byron, as from the commencement of their intimacy at Geneva, he could trace an entirely new vein of thought emanating from Shelley, which ran through Byron's subsequent works, and was so peculiar that it could not have arisen from any other source'. This was true. Byron was but superficial on points on which Shelley was most profound—and the latter's capacity for study, the depth of his thoughts as well as their boldness, and his superior scholarship, supplied the former with exactly what he wanted: and thus a portion of Shelley's aspirations were infused into Byron's mind. Ready as Shelley always was with his purse or person to assist others, his purse had a limit, but his mental wealth seemed to have

none; for not only to Byron, but to any one disposed to try his hand at literature, Shelley was ever ready to give any amount of mental labour. Every detail of the life of a man of genius is interesting, and Shelley's was so pre-eminently, as his life harmonized with his spiritual theories. He fearlessly laid bare those mysterious feelings and impulses, of which few dare to speak, but in a form so purified from earthy matter that the most sensitive reader is never shocked. Shelley says of his own writings in the preface to *The Cenci*: 'They are little else than visions which impersonate my own apprehensions of the beautiful and the just—they are dreams of what ought to be, or may be'. Whilst he lived his works fell stillborn from the press—he never complained of the world's neglect, or expressed any other feeling than surprise at the rancorous abuse wasted on an author who had no readers. 'But for them,' he said, laughing, 'I should be utterly unknown.' 'But for them,' I observed, 'Williams and I should never have crossed the Alps in chase of you. Our curiosity as sportsmen was excited to see and have a shot at so strange a monster as they represented you to be.'

It must not be forgotten that Shelley lived in the good old times, under the paternal government of the Tories, when liberal opinions were prohibited and adjudged as contraband of war. England was then very much like what Naples is now.

Sydney Smith says:

From the beginning of the century to the death of Lord Liverpool, was an awful period for any one who ventured to maintain liberal opinions. He was sure to be assailed with all the Billingsgate of the French Revolution; 'Jacobin', 'Leveller', 'Atheist', 'Incendiary', 'Regicide', were the gentlest terms used, and any man who breathed a syllable against the senseless bigotry of the two Georges, was shunned as unfit for social life. To say a word against any abuse which a rich man inflicted, and a poor man suffered, was bitterly and steadily resented, and [he adds] in one year, 12,000 persons were committed for offences against the Game Laws.

Shelley's life was a proof that the times in which he lived were awful for those who dared to maintain liberal opinions. They caused his expulsion from Oxford, and for them his parents discarded him, every member of his family disowned him, and the savage Chancellor Eldon deprived him of his children.

Sydney Smith says of this chancellor, that he was 'the most heartless, bigoted, and mischievous of human beings, who passed a long life in perpetuating all sorts of abuses, and in making money of them'.

## CHAPTER XIV

It is mentioned in my narrative that when I left Leghorn in the *Bolivar* to burn the bodies I dispatched two large feluccas, with ground-tackling, to drag for Shelley's foundered boat, having previously ascertained the spot in which she had been last seen afloat. This was done for five or six days, and they succeeded in finding her, but failed in getting her up. I then wrote the particulars to my friend, Capt. Roberts, who was still at Genoa, asking him to complete the business. He did so, whilst I went on to Rome, and, as will be seen by the following letters, he not only found, but got her up, and brought her into the harbour of Leghorn.

PISA, Sept. 1822.

DEAR T.

We have got fast hold of Shelley's boat, and she is now safe at anchor off Via Reggio. Everything is in her, and clearly proves, that she was not capsized. I think she must have been swamped by a heavy sea; we found in her two trunks, that of Williams, containing money and clothes, and Shelley's, filled with books and clothes.

Yours, very sincerely,

DAN ROBERTS.

Sept. 18, 1822.

DEAR T.

I consulted Ld. B., on the subject of paying the crews of the felucca employed in getting up the boat. He advised me to sell her by auction, and to give them half the proceeds of the sale. I rode your horse to Via Reggio. On Monday we had the sale, and only realized a trifle more than two hundred dollars.

The two masts were carried away just above board, the bowsprit broken off close to the bows, the gunwale stove in, and the hull half full of blue clay, out of which we fished clothes, books, spyglass, and other articles. A hamper of wine that Shelley bought at Leghorn, a present for the harbour-master of Lerici, was spoilt, the corks forced partly out of the bottles, and the wine mixed with the salt-water. You know, this is effected by the pressure of the cold sea-water.

We found in the boat two memorandum-books of Shelley's, quite perfect, and another damaged, a journal of Williams's, quite perfect, written up to the 4th of July. I washed the printed books, some of them were so glued together by the slimy mud, that the leaves

could not be separated; most of these things are now in Ld. B.'s custody. The letters, private papers, and Williams's journal, I left in charge of Hunt, as I saw there were many severe remarks on Ld. B.

Ld. B. has found out that you left at Genoa some of the ballast of the *Bolivar*, and he asked me to sell it for him. What a damned close calculating fellow he is. You are so bigoted in his favour that I will say no more, only God defend me from ever having anything more to do with him.

P.S. On a close examination of Shelley's boat, we find many of the timbers on the starboard quarter broken, which makes me think for certain, that she must have been run down by some of the feluccas in the squall.

DAN ROBERTS.

Byron's spirit was always on the fret and fume to be doing something new and strange; he exhausted himself in speculating, plotting, and planning; but when it came to the point of execution, the inertness of his body and his halting gait held him fast, so that few men even amongst the poets did more in imagination and less in reality than he did. One of his pleas for hoarding money was, that he might buy a province in Chili or Peru, to which he once added archly: 'Of course with a gold or silver mine to pay usance for my monies': at another time it was Mexico and copper; and when savage with the Britishers he would threaten to go to the United States and be naturalized; he once asked me to apply to the American consul at Leghorn, and Commodore Jones of the American navy, then in the harbour, offered him a passage. Byron visited the ship, and was well pleased with his reception; there was a beginning, but no middle or end to his enterprises. The undercurrent of his mind was always drifting towards the East; he envied the free and independent manner in which Lady Hester Stanhope lived in Syria, and often reverted to it. He said he would have gone there if she had not forestalled him.

Then his thoughts veered round to his early love, the Isles of Greece, and the revolution in that country—for before that time he never dreamt of donning the warrior's plume, though the peace-loving Shelley had suggested and I urged it. He asked me to get him any information I could amongst my friends at Leghorn of the state of Greece; but as it was a common practice of his to make such inquiries without any serious object, I took little heed of his request.

We were then at Pisa in the old palace, which he was about giving up, Mrs. Shelley having gone to Genoa, and taken for him the Casa Saluzzi at Albaro, near Genoa; the Hunts too were



about moving to the same destination. I had determined to return to Rome, but stopped to convoy them in the *Bolivar*.

When a lazy and passive master who has never learnt, or if he may have learnt has forgotten, how to put on his trousers, shave, or brush his hair, in a sudden ecstasy or impulse resolves to do everything for himself and everybody else, as Byron now attempted to do, the hubbub, din, and confusion that ensue are frightful. If the Casa Lanfranchi had been on fire at midnight it could not have been worse, nor I more pleased at escaping from it, as I did, under the plea of getting the flotilla ready at Leghorn.

In September we all left Tuscany, Byron by land, the Hunts in one felucca; and Byron's servants, and what the Yankee would have called a freight of notions, in another; for as Byron never sold or gave away anything he had acquired, there was all the rubbish accumulated in the many years he had lived in Italy, besides his men, women, dogs, and monkeys, and all that was theirs. In the *Bolivar* I had only a few things, such as plate, books, and papers; we put into Lerici, and there all met again. I took Hunt to the Villa Magni, where Shelley had lived. Byron came on board the *Bolivar*, we had a sail and a swim, after which he was seized with spasms and remained two days in bed. On my visiting him and questioning him as to his ailments, he said he was always 'bedevilled for a week after moving'.

'No wonder,' I answered, 'if you always make such a dire commotion before it.'

'Look in that book,' pointing to one on the table, Thomas's *Domestic Medicine*, 'look for a prescription.'

'For what? what is your complaint?' I said. 'How do you feel?'

'Feel! why just as that damned obstreperous fellow felt chained to a rock, the vultures gnawing my midriff, and vitals too, for I have no liver.' As the spasms returned, he roared out: 'I don't care for dying, but I cannot bear this! It's past joking, call Fletcher; give me something that will end it—or me! I can't stand it much longer'.

His valet brought some ether and laudanum, and we compounded a drench as prescribed in the book, with an outward application of hot towels, and other remedies. Luckily, the medico of Lerici was absent, so in two or three days our patient was well enough to resume his journey, and we all started for Genoa, where we arrived without further accident.

All that were now left of our Pisan circle established themselves

at Albaro—Byron, Leigh Hunt, and Mrs. Shelley. I took up my quarters in the city of palaces. The fine spirit that had animated and held us together was gone! Left to our own devices, we degenerated apace. Shelley's solidity had checked Byron's flippancy, and induced him occasionally to act justly, and talk seriously; now he seemed more sordid and selfish than ever. He behaved shabbily to Mrs. Shelley; I might use a harsher epithet. In all the transactions between Shelley and Byron in which expenses had occurred, and they were many, the former, as was his custom, had paid all, the latter promising to repay; but as no one ever repaid Shelley, Byron did not see the necessity of his setting the example; and now that Mrs. Shelley was left destitute by her husband's death, Byron did nothing for her. He regretted this when too late, for in our voyage to Greece he alluded to Shelley, saying: 'Tre, you did what I should have done, let us square accounts to-morrow; I must pay my debts'. I merely observed: 'Money is of no use at sea, and when you get on shore you will find you have none to spare'; he probably thought so too, for he said nothing more on the subject.

I was not surprised at Byron's niggardly ways, he had been taught them in boyhood by his mother. In early manhood he was a good fellow, and did generous things; until bad company, called good society, spoilt and ruined him. To recover his fortune and sustain his pride he relapsed into the penurious habits drilled into him in his youth.

## CHAPTER XV

It is the same!—For be it joy or sorrow,  
The path of its departure still is free;  
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;  
Naught may endure but Mutability.

SHELLEY.

BYRON, in common with actors and other public characters, considered it indispensable to the preservation of his popularity that he should keep continually before the public; and that an alliance with an able and friendly newspaper would be an easy way of doing so. Not that he would or could submit to the methodical drudgery of continually writing for one, but that he might occasionally use it for criticizing and attacking those who offended him, as a vent for his splenetic humours. Shelley, knowing Byron could not reason, and that his criticism degenerated into rancorous personality, opposed the scheme; still, Byron had a hankering to try his powers in those hand-to-hand conflicts then in vogue, even in the great Reviews. When he consented to join Leigh Hunt and others in writing for the *Liberal*, I think his principal inducement was in the belief that John and Leigh Hunt were proprietors of the *Examiner*; so when Leigh Hunt at Pisa told him he was no longer connected with that paper, Byron was taken aback, finding that Hunt would be entirely dependent on the success of their hazardous project, while he would himself be deprived of that on which he had set his heart—the use of a weekly paper in great circulation.

The death of Shelley, and the failure of the *Liberal*, irritated Byron; the cuckoo note: 'I told you so', sung by his friends, and the loud crowing of enemies, by no means allayed his ill-humour. In this frame of mind he was continually planning and plotting how to extricate himself. His plea for hoarding was that he might have a good round tangible sum of current coin to aid him in any emergency, as 'money', he observed, 'is the only true and constant friend a wise man puts his trust in. I can now raise nine or ten thousand, and with that I can buy an island in the Greek Archipelago, or a principality of auriferous soil in Chili or Peru. Lady Hester Stanhope's way of life in Syria would just suit my humour'. I urged him on, for I was bent on travel

and willing to go anywhere. He exhausted himself in planning, projecting, beginning, wishing, intending, postponing, regretting, and doing nothing; the unready are fertile in excuses, and his were inexhaustible; so I determined to be off. At this time a committee was formed in London to aid the Greeks in their war of independence, and shortly after I wrote to one of the most active movers in it, Lieut. Blaquiere, to ask information as to their objects and intentions, and mentioned Byron as being very much interested on the subject of Greece; the Lieutenant wrote, as from the committee, direct to Byron, in the grandiloquent style which all authorities, especially self-constituted ones, delight in. In the early part of 1823 Blaquiere on his way to the Ionian Islands, stopped at Genoa, and saw Byron, whom he informed of his intention to visit Greece, in order to see how matters were progressing. He said that his lordship had been unanimously elected a member of the Greek Committee, and that his name was a tower of strength; he brought Byron's credentials, and a mass of papers. The propositions of the committee came at the right moment; the pilgrim was dissatisfied with himself and his position. Greece and its memories warmed him, a new career opened before him. His first impulses were always ardent, but if not acted on instantly, they cooled. He was a prompt penman, often answering in hot haste letters that excited his feelings, and following his first replies up by others to allay their fervour, or as the Persians have it, 'eating his words'. But the Greek Committee were not to be fobbed off; they resolved to have him on any terms, so they assented to all he suggested. The official style of the documents sent by the committee, the great seal and the prodigality of wax and diplomatic phrases, as well as the importance attached to his name, and the great events predicted from his personal exertions, tickled the poet's fancy—and moreover they lauded and mylorded him to his heart's content.

With as little a web as this, will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio.

The negotiation with the committee occupied some months before Byron, perplexed in the extreme, finally committed himself. He might well hesitate. It would have been difficult to find a man more unfit for such an enterprise; but he had a great name, and that was all the committee required. The marvel was that he lent it. Moore, Byron's biographer, suggests that he embarked in this crusade to rekindle his mental light and failing popularity, whereas the chronology of his works

proves that his mental powers waxed stronger as he grew older, and that his last poems were his best. That envy, malice, and hatred bedogged his steps, snarling and snapping is true, but neither his power nor popularity had declined, nor did he think so. In after years, on my talking with the late Mr. Murray, his publisher, on this subject, he said: 'I observed no falling off in his lordship's powers or popularity during the latter period of his life, quite the reverse; but I heard such general censures on him from literary and other people who frequented my shop, and they spoke in such a depreciating tone of his later writings, that I became greatly alarmed as his publisher; and as I entertained a warm personal regard for his lordship, I lightly touched on the subject in my letters to him. I was a great fool for so doing, for Mr. Gifford, the ablest scholar of them all, and one who did not throw his words away, as well as a few men of the same stamp occasionally dropped remarks which satisfied me I had done wrong in alluding to the subject, for it was after reading the latter cantos of *Don Juan* that Mr. Gifford said:

"Upon my soul, I do not know where to place Byron. I think we can't find a niche for him unless we go back and place him after Shakespeare and Milton"—after a pause—"there is no other place for him."

I observed to Murray that Moore had only seen Byron in society; his *Life* of his brother bard was a mystification; his comments might be considered very eloquent as a rhapsody, if they had been spoken over the poet's grave, but they give no idea of the individuality of the man.

'The most valuable parts of Moore's *Life* are the letters addressed to you,' I continued; 'and as they were designed for publication you should have printed them with his prose works.'

Murray replied: 'You are quite right. If ever a statute of lunacy is taken out against me, it must be on the plea of my mad agreement with Moore for Byron's *Life*, by which I lost credit, and a great deal of money; but it is not too late to redeem my error so far as the public is concerned; rather than leave it as it is I will get Lockhart, or somebody else, to do the thing as it should be done'.

I have been seduced into this digression to show from what a small squad of malignants came the cry of Byron's failing powers and popularity.

In December 1822 I laid up the poet's pleasure-boat, paid off the crew, retaining the first mate in my service as a groom, and early in the following year, 1823, started on horseback—with

the aforesaid sailor, mounted, to act as tender—to take a cruise inland. So during Byron's negotiation with the Greek Committee, and Blaquiere's visit to Albaro, I was absent, but being apprised of what was going on I was not surprised when in Rome at receiving the following note:

June 15, 1823.

MY DEAR T.,

You must have heard that I am going to Greece. Why do you not come to me? I want your aid, and am exceedingly anxious to see you. Pray come, for I am at last determined to go to Greece; it is the only place I was ever contented in. I am serious, and did not write before, as I might have given you a journey for nothing; they all say I can be of use in Greece. I do not know how, nor do they; but at all events let us go.

Yours, etc., truly,  
N. BYRON

To show Byron's vacillating state of mind, I quote some passages from letters I received at that time.

Captain Roberts, in a letter dated 26 May, 1823, Genoa, says:

Between you and me, I think, there is small chance of Byron's going to Greece; so I think from the wavering manner in which he speaks of it; he said the other day, 'Well, Captain, if we do not go to Greece, I am determined to go somewhere, and hope we shall all be at sea together by next month, as I am tired of this place, the shore, and all the people on it'.

Ten days after, in a letter dated 5 June, Roberts writes me:

Byron has sold the *Bolivar* to Lord Blessington for four hundred guineas; and is determined to go to Greece: he says, whilst he was in doubt, fearing it might prove a reality, he did not like to bring you here; now, he wishes much to see you to have your opinion as to what steps it will be most necessary to take. I have been on board several vessels with him; as yet he has not decided on any of them. I think he would find it answer, now he has sold the schooner, to buy the three-masted clipper we saw at Leghorn, to refit and arm her, as I am much of your way of thinking, for a big gun or two, and legs to run and wings to pursue, as the case may be, for the Greek waters are pestered with pirates. I have written by his desire to Dunn about her; if you come here by way of Leghorn, pray overhaul her, and then you will be able to give him your opinion. I think she will do excellently well, except the accommodation—the cabin is small. He has asked me to be of the party.

Four days after I had received the above, Mrs. Shelley, having just seen Byron, wrote me from Genoa, 9 June:

Lord Byron says, that as he has not heard from Greece, his going there is uncertain; but if he does go, he is extremely desirous that

you should join him, and if you will continue to let him know where you may be found, he will inform you as soon as he comes to any decision

This was not the last of Byron's counter-messages to me, besides commissions which I was urged instantly to execute; knowing him I took no heed nor made any preparations until he wrote me that he had chartered a vessel. On the 22nd I received this note from him:

DEAR T.,

I have engaged a vessel (now on her way to Leghorn to unload), and on her return to Genoa we embark. She is called the *Hercules*; you can come back in her, if you like, it will save you a land journey. I need not say I shall like your company of all things. I want a surgeon, native or foreign, to take charge of medical stores, and be in personal attendance. Salary, a hundred pounds a year, and his treatment at our table, as a companion and a gentleman. He must have recommendations, of course. Could you look out for me? Perhaps you can consult Vacca, to whom I have written on the same subject; we are, however, pressed for time a little. I expect you with impatience, and am ever yours,

N. B.

Byron's letters to his literary allies were written carefully, expressly to be shown about. He said, on seeing the word *private* on a letter: 'That will ensure its becoming public. If I really wish mine to be private, I say things that my correspondents don't wish divulged'. When he wrote on the spur of the moment his letters were often obscure and peevish; if he gave them me to read, and I told him they would offend, he would rewrite them still more offensively. Omitting his more lengthy scrawls, as they would require tedious notes to explain them, I give two or three short samples of his ordinary natural style.

On his hearing that a naval officer of the *Despatch* sloop of war had boarded his boat at Leghorn, and taken away her pennant, he wrote to me:

PISA, August 10, 1822.

DEAR T.,

I always foresaw and told you that they would take every opportunity of annoying me in every respect. If you get American papers and permission to sail under their flag, I shall be very glad, and should much prefer it, but I doubt that it will be very difficult

Yours,

N. B.

Byron had a dispute with Captain Roberts on a very frivolous subject; he sent me a letter to forward to the captain; I refused

to forward it, saying it would not do, on which he wrote me the following:

GENOA, 9m. 28d. 1822.

MY DEAR T.,

I enclose you a letter from, and another to, Captain R., which may be more to your taste, but at any rate it contains all that I have to say on the subject; you will, I presume, write and enclose it or not, according to your own opinion [it was one of his long-winded offensive epistles, so I did not send it]. I repeat that I have no wish for a quarrel, but if it comes unlooked for, it must be received accordingly. I recognize no right in any man to interfere between me and men in my pay, of whose conduct I have the best right to judge.

Yours, ever and afterwards,  
N. B.

9th Month, 21d. 1822.

MY DEAR T.,

Thank you, I was just going to send you down some books, and the compass of the *Don Juan*, which I believe belongs to Captain Roberts; if there is anything of yours on board the *Bolívar*, let me know, that I may send it or keep it for you. I don't know how our account stands; you will let me know if there is any balance due to you that I may pay it. I am willing to make any agreement with a proper person in the arsenal to look after her, and also to have the rigging deposited in a safe place. I have given the boy and one of the men their clothes, and if Mr. Beeze had been civil, and Frost honest, I should not have been obliged to go so near the wind with them. But I hate bothering you with these things. I agree with you in your parting sentence, and hope we shall have better luck another time. There is one satisfaction, however, which is, that the displeasures have been rather occasioned by untoward circumstances, and not by the disposition of any party concerned. But such are human things even in little; we would hardly have had more plague with a first-rate. No news of any kind from England, which don't look well.

Yours, ever and truly,  
N. B.

This referred to a threatened prosecution of his 'Vision of Judgement', which had been published in Hunt's *Liberal*.



## CHAPTER XVI

He passed forth, and new adventure sought;  
Long way he travelled before he heard of aught.

*Faery Queene*—SPENSER.

FORWARDING my traps to Leghorn, I was soon on the road to Genoa. My sailor groom had returned to his family, and I engaged an American-born negro to fill his place. In Italy I invariably travelled on horseback. The distances from one town to another are short, the scenery is varied, and the climate beautiful; besides, Italy is peculiarly adapted to this slow, yet only way of thoroughly seeing a country. Most travellers fly through in a string, like a flock of wild geese, merely alighting at the great cities. As the weather was hot and the days long, we started every morning at four or five o'clock, and jogged along until ten or eleven, then pulled up at town, village, or solitary locanda, or in default of these, looked out for a wood, dell, ruin, or other place that promised shade and water. Then dismounting we fed our horses from nose-bags, made up a fire, boiled coffee, breakfasted off such things as we had brought with us, smoked our pipes and fell asleep. Our provender was carried by the black, in old-fashioned saddlebags. In that fine climate our wants were so few that they provided ample stowage room. I had two excellent Hungarian cavalry horses, bought from an Austrian colonel. Our usual day's travel was from thirty-five to forty-five miles; the best half of the distance we always accomplished before breakfast, so that our day's journey was completed at four or five in the evening, and every day both horses and men improved in condition. If there is any healthier or pleasanter way of life than this I can only say I have never enjoyed it.

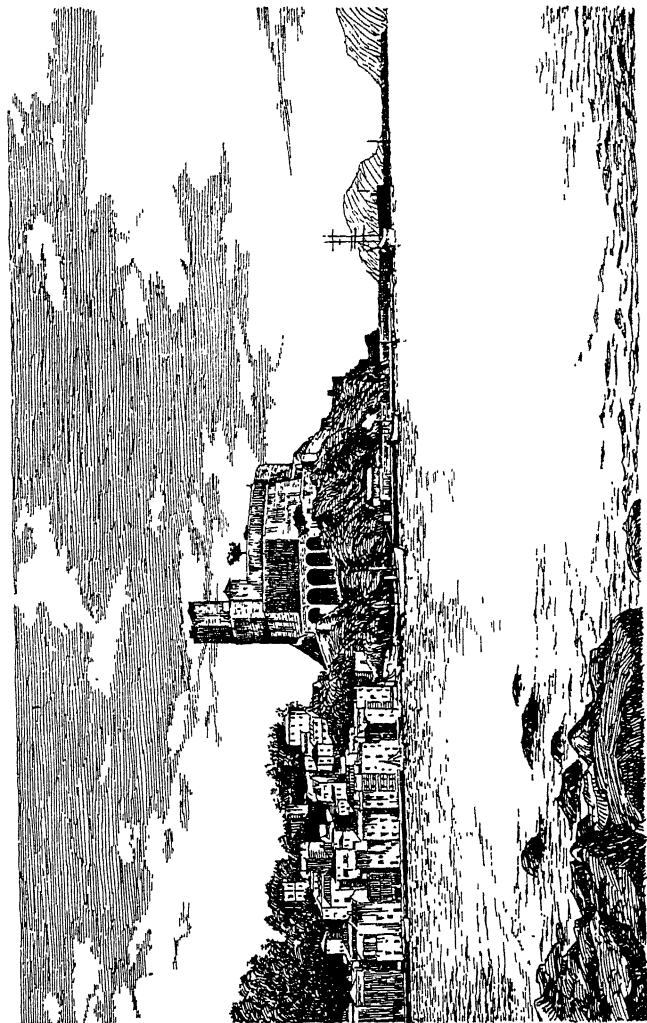
However long the journey it was never tedious, and I always regretted its termination. I stopped two days at Florence, and then shaped my course for the seaboard, through Massa and Rapallo, Sarzana, Lerici, and Spezzia, on which coast everything was familiar to me, and associated with the memories of my lost friends Shelley and Williams. My horses stopped at their accustomed locandas, and many familiar faces came out to welcome me.

I arrived early at Lerici, and determined to sleep there, and finish my journey to Genoa on the following day. In the evening I walked to the Villa Magni, where the Shelleys had last lived, and the ground floor having neither door nor window, I walked in. Shelley's shattered skiff in which he used to go adventuring, as he termed it, in rivers and canals, was still there: in that little flat-bottomed boat he had written many beautiful things:

Our boat is asleep on Serchio's stream,  
The sails are furled like thoughts in a dream,  
The helm sways idly, hither and thither;  
Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,  
And the oars and the sail: but 'tis sleeping fast.

And here it was, sleeping still on the mud floor, with its mast and oars broken. I mounted the stairs or rather ladder into the dining-room they had lived in, for this and four small bedrooms was all the space they had. As I surveyed its splashy walls, broken floor, cracked ceiling, and poverty-struck appearance, while I noted the loneliness of the situation, and remembered the fury of the waves that in blowing weather lashed its walls, I did not marvel at Mrs. Shelley's and Mrs. Williams's groans on first entering it; nor that it had required all Ned Williams's persuasive powers to induce them to stop there. We men had only looked at the sea and scenery, and would have been satisfied with a tent. But women look to a house as their empire. Ladies without a drawing-room are like pictures without frames, or birds without feathers; knowing this, they set to work with a will, and transformed it into a very pleasant abode.

One of the customs of the natives of this bay reminded me of the South Sea Islanders. At sunset the whole population of men, women, and children, took to the water, sporting in it for hours like wild ducks; we occasionally did the same, Shelley especially delighting in the sport. His wife looked grave, and said 'it was improper'. Shelley protested vehemently against the arbitrary power of the word, saying: 'Hush Mary, that insidious word has never been echoed by these woods and rocks: don't teach it them. It was one of the words my fellow serpent whispered into Eve's ear, and when I hear it, I wish I was far away on some lone island, with no other inhabitants than seals, sea-birds, and water-rats'. Then turning to his friend, he continued: 'At Pisa, Mary said a jacket was not proper because others did not wear them, and here it's not proper to bathe, because everybody does. Oh! what shall we do?'



THE BAY OF LERICI



The next day I started at daylight for Genoa, and when I came near Albaro I sent my horses to the city, and walked to the Casa Saluzzi; of which all the doors and windows were open, as is usual in Italian country houses during summer evenings. I walked in, and as I did not see any of Byron's people, I looked into five or six of the fifty or sixty rooms, which the palace contained before I found the pilgrim's penetralia: he was so deeply absorbed that he did not hear my steps. There he sat with a pen in his hand, and papers before him, with a painfully perplexed expression and heated brow, such as an inspired Pythoness might have had on her tripod. I thought it a sacrilege to profane his sanctuary, and was hesitating whether I should retreat or advance, when his bulldog Moretto came in from the hall: so I spoke to the dog.

Byron, recognizing my voice, sprang up with his usual alacrity and shook my hand with unusual warmth. After a hasty chat, he halloed out lustily for his servants, for there were no bells: he was going out of the room saying: 'You must be hungry, we will see what there is in the house'.

I assured him I was not, and that I could not stop, as I wished to see Mrs. Shelley and the Leigh Hunts.

'Aye, aye,' he observed, 'they are flesh-eaters—you scorn my lenten fare, but come back soon, I will dispatch my salad and sardines, and then we will discuss a bottle of hock, and talk over matters; I have a great deal to tell you, but I must first balance these cursed bills; I have been an hour poring over this one you found me at, and my *tottle* don't square with Legá; in the time thus lost I might have written half a canto of *Don Juan*—and the amount of the bill is only one hundred and forty-three lire, which is not six pounds. In cases of lunacy the old demon Eldon decided men's sanity by figures; if I had been had up before him (I was very near being so), and he had given me the simplest sum in arithmetic, I should have been consigned to durance vile:

For the rule of three it puzzles me,  
And practice drives me mad.'

In about an hour and a half I returned to the Casa Saluzzi, and found the poet still hard at work on his weekly bills. He observed archly: 'I have found out in another account of the steward's that he has cheated himself; that is his affair, not mine'. This put him in good humour, so he gathered up the scattered accounts, and put them away. He then read me his

correspondence with the Greek Committee, or rather the last portion of it, and a letter from Blaquiere, from Greece, and told me what he thought of doing. Promising to see Byron the following day I left him and walked to my locanda at Genoa. It was plain enough from what I had just seen, that with regard to money his mind had undergone no change. He thought he was in honour bound to go to Zante to meet Blaquiere—the rest seemed to depend on blind chance. The committee suggested no definite plan, nor could he form one.

Mental as well as physical diseases are hereditary. Byron's arrogant temper he inherited, his penurious habits were instilled into him by his mother; he was reared in poverty and obscurity, and unexpectedly became a lord, with a good estate: this was enough to unsettle the equanimity of such a temperament as his. But fortune as well as misfortune comes with both hands full, and when, as he himself said, he awoke one morning and found himself famous, his brain grew dizzy, and he foolishly entered the great donkey sweepstakes, and ran in the ruck with his long-cared compeers—galled in the race, he bolted off the course, and rushed into the ranks of that great sect that worships golden images. If you come too near the improvident or the reckless, there is danger of being engulfed in the vortex they create, whereas with the thrifty you may do well enough. Thus ruminating, I reached my inn, the Croce di Malta.

The next day Byron called, he wished me to go on board the brig he had chartered—the *Hercules*, Capt. Scott—to see her equipments and accommodations, and report thereon. I did so, and was very much dissatisfied. She was a collier-built tub of one hundred and twenty tons, round-bottomed, and bluff-bowed, and of course a dull sailer, with the bulkheads, the horse-boxes, and other fittings newly put up, ill-contrived, and scamped by the contractor. The captain, one of the rough old John Bull stamp, was well enough—the mate better, and no fault to be found with the crew, but that they were too few in number. For such an expedition we should have had a well-manned and fast-sailing clipper-built craft, adapted to the light winds and summer seas prevailing in the Greek Archipelago, so that after calling at the Ionian Islands we could have used her as a yacht, run over to the Morea, touching at several ports not blockaded by the Turks, and ascertained the exact state of the war, its wants, capabilities, and more especially the characters of those who conducted it. We might then have exacted conditions before committing ourselves to any specific line of action.

Under the English flag this and much more might have been done. On saying this to Byron, he answered:

‘There was no other vessel than the *Hercules* to be had at Genoa.’

‘Leghorn is the place for shipping,’ said I.

‘Why, then, did you not come here sooner? I had no one to help me.’

‘You had Captain Roberts, the very man for the occasion; we might as well have built a raft and so chanced it.’

Then smiling, he replied: ‘They say I have got her on very easy terms’.

‘Aye, but the time she will be on her voyage will make her a bad bargain; she will take a week to drift to Leghorn, and it should be done in twenty hours.’

‘We must make the best of it. I will pay her off at the Ionian Islands, and stop there until I see my way, for here we can learn nothing. Blaquiere is to meet me at Zante by appointment, and he is now in the Morea.’

## CHAPTER XVII

Awak'ning with a start!  
The waters heave around me: and on high  
The winds lift up their voices: I depart,  
Whither I know not.

*Childe Harold*—BYRON.

ON 13 July 1823 we shipped the horses, four of Byron's, and one of mine, and in the evening, Byron, Gamba, and an unfledged medical student, with five or six servants, embarked. I and my negro completed the complement. On my observing to Byron the doctor would be of no use, as he had seen no practice, he answered: 'If he knows little I pay little, and we will find him plenty of work'. The next day it was a dead calm, so we re-landed; on the 15th we weighed anchor at daylight, several American ships in compliment to Byron, sending their boats to tow us out of the bay, but made very little progress; we lay in the offing all day like a log upon the main under a broiling sun—the Italians skipping about, gesticulating, and chattering like wild monkeys in a wood. The pilgrim sat apart, solemn and sad—he took no notice of anything nor spoke a word. At midnight the sea breeze set in and quickly freshened, so we shortened sail and hauled our wind. As soon as the old tub began to play at pitch and toss the noisy Italians, with the exception of the Venetian gondolier, Baptista, crept into holes and corners in consternation. The horses kicked down their flimsy partitions, and my black groom and I had to secure them, while the sea got up and the wind increased. I told Byron that we must bear up for port, or we should lose our cattle—'Do as you like', he said. So we bore up, and after a rough night re-anchored in our former berth; as the sun rose the wind died away, and one by one the land-lubbers crawled on deck. Byron having remained all night on deck laughed at the miserable figure they cut; they all went on shore, and I set to work with two or three English carpenters to repair damages.

In the evening we took a fresh departure, and the weather continuing fine, we had no other delay than that which arose from the bad sailing qualities of our vessel. We were five days on our passage to Leghorn, not averaging more than twenty



miles a day. We all messed and most of us slept, on deck. Byron unusually silent and serious, was generally during the day reading Scott's *Life of Swift*, Col. Hipplesey's *Expedition to South America*, Grimm's *Correspondence*, or Rochefoucauld. This was his usual style of reading on shore. We were two days at Leghorn completing our sea stores. A Mr. Hamilton Brown and two Greeks, who had previously applied to Byron for a passage, came on board. One of the Greeks called himself Prince Shilizzi, the other, Vitaili, assumed no higher rank than Captain. The friends who accompanied them on board whispered me to be wary of them, asserting that the prince was a Russian spy, and the captain in the interests of the Turks. This was our first sample of the morality of the modern Greeks. On my telling this to Byron he merely said: 'And a fair sample too of the ancient as well as modern, if Mitford is to be believed'.

Our Scotch passenger, with no other handle to his name than plain Mr. Hamilton Brown, was an acquisition; he had been in office in the Ionian Islands, spoke Italian and Romaic, and knew a good deal of the Greeks, as well as the characters of the English residents in command of the Islands. From what we learnt from him we altered our plan, and instead of Zante decided on going to Cephalonia, as Sir C. J. Napier was in command there, and the only man in office favourably disposed to the Greeks and their cause. We remained two days at Leghorn completing our stores. I don't remember that Byron went on shore more than once, and then only to settle his accounts with his agent Webb. As we were getting under weigh, my friend Grant came on board, and gave Byron the latest English papers, Reviews, and the first volume of Las Cases's *Memoirs of Napoleon*, just out. On 23 July 1823 we put to sea in the finest possible weather; drifting leisurely along the Italian coast, we sighted Piombino, a town in the midst of the pestilential lagoons of the Maremma famous for its wild fowl and fevers; a dark line of jungle fringed the shore for many leagues; we crossed the mouth of the muddy Tiber; saw the Alban Mount, and Mount Soracte, the landmarks which point out the site of Rome. On coming near Lonza, a small islet, converted into one of their many dungeons by the Neapolitan government, I said to Byron:

'There is a sight that would curdle the milky blood of a poet laureate.'

'If Southey was here,' he answered, 'he would sing hosannas to the Bourbons. Here kings and governors are only the jailors and hangmen of the detestable Austrian barbarians. What

dolts and drivellers the people are to submit to such universal despotism. I should like to see, from this our ark, the world submerged, and all the rascals on it drowning like rats.'

I put a pencil and paper in his hand, saying:

'Perpetuate your curses on tyranny, for poets like ladies generally side with the despots.'

He readily took the paper and set to work. I walked the deck, and prevented his being disturbed. He looked as crest-fallen as a riotous boy, suddenly pounced upon by a master and given an impossible task, scrawling and scratching out, sadly perplexed. After a long spell, he said:

'You think it is as easy to write poetry as smoke a segar—look, it's only doggerel. Extemporizing verses is nonsense; poetry is a distinct faculty—it won't come when called—you may as well whistle for a wind; a Pythoness was primed when put upon her tripod. I must chew the cud before I write. I have thought over most of my subjects for years before writing a line.'

He did not, however, give up the task, and sat pondering over the paper for nearly an hour; then gnashing his teeth, he tore up what he had written, and threw the fragments overboard.

Seeing I looked disappointed:

'You might as well ask me to describe an earthquake, whilst the ground was trembling under my feet. Give me time—I can't forget the theme: but for this Greek business I should have been at Naples writing a fifth canto of *Childe Harold*, expressly to give vent to my detestation of the Austrian tyranny in Italy.'

Some time after I suggested he should write a war song for the Greeks; he did so afterwards. I saw the original amongst his papers at Missolonghi, and made a copy of it which I have lost. Proceeding on our voyage, it was not until we had been some days fairly at sea, with no land to look back upon, that the pilgrim regained something of his self-command—he may have felt the truth of the old song:

Now we're in for it, dam'ee what folly, boys,  
To be downhearted, yo ho.

His sadness intermitted, and his cold fits alternated with hot ones. Hitherto he had taken very little notice of anything, and when he talked it was with an effort. The lonely and grim-looking island of Stromboli was the first object that riveted his attention; it was shrouded in the smoke from its eternal volcanic fires, and the waves rolling into the deep caverns at its base,

boomed dismally. A poet might have compared it to the bellowings of imprisoned demons.

Our captain told us a story at night. It was an old tale told by all Levant sailors, and they are not particular as to names and dates.

'That a ship from the port of London was lying off this island loading with sulphur, when her captain, who was on shore superintending the men, distinctly saw Alderman Curtis——'

'Not Alderman Curtis,' shouted Byron, 'but cut-throat Castlereagh!'

'Whoever it was, my lord,' continued the skipper, 'he was walking round and round the edge of the burning crater; his mate and crew were witnesses of the same; and when the vessel returned to England they heard that the person they had seen was dead; and the time of his death tallied exactly with the above event, as entered in the ship's log-book.'

Byron, taking up the yarn-spinning, said:

'Monk Lewis told me, that he took lodgings at Weimar in Germany, and that every morning he was awakened by a rustling noise, as of quantities of papers being torn open and eagerly handled; the noise came from a closet joining his room; he several times got out of bed and looked into it, but there was no one there. At length he told the servant of the house. The man said: "Don't you know the house is haunted? It belonged formerly to a lady; she had an only son, he left her and went to sea, and the ship was never heard of—but the mother still believed he would return, and passed all her time in reading foreign newspapers, of which the closet was full; and when she died, at the same hour every morning, in that closet, her spirit is heard frantically tearing open papers."

'Monk Lewis,' added Byron, 'though so fond of a ghost story, was not superstitious, he believed nothing. Once at a dinner party he said to me, across the table: "Byron, what did you mean by calling me Apollo's sexton in your *English Bards*?" I was so taken aback I could not answer him, nor could I now. Now, Tre,' he said, 'it's your turn to spin a yarn.'

'I will tell you one of presentiment,' I said, 'for you believe in that.'

'Certainly, I do,' he rejoined.

'The captain of Lord Keith's ship, when she was lying at Leghorn, was on a visit to Signor Felleichi, at Pisa; the captain was of a very gay and talkative turn; suddenly he became silent and sad; his host asked if he was ill? he said: "No, I wish I was

on board my ship; I feel as if I was going to be hanged". At last he was persuaded to go to bed; but, before he got to his room an express arrived with the news that his ship was on fire. He instantly posted to Leghorn, went on board, worked his ship out of the harbour to avoid perilling the other vessels lying there, but in spite of great exertion the fire reached the magazine, and every soul perished. A little middy on shore at Leghorn, with a heart as great as his captain's, gave a boatman a draft on Signor Felleichi for sixty pounds, to put him alongside his ship.'

The poet had an antipathy to everything scientific; maps and charts offended him; he would not look through a spy-glass, and only knew the cardinal points of the compass; buildings the most ancient or modern he was as indifferent to as he was to painting, sculpture, and music. But all natural objects, and changes in the elements, he was generally the first to point out and the last to lose sight of. We lay-to all night off Stromboli; Byron sat up watching it. As he went down to his cabin at daylight he said:

'If I live another year you will see this scene in a fifth canto of *Childe Harold*.'

In the morning we entered the narrow strait of Messina, passed close by the precipitous promontory of Scylla, and at the distance of a mile on the opposite shore, Charybdis; the waters were boiling and lashed into foam and whirlpools by the conflicting currents and set of the sea; in bad weather it is dangerous to approach too near in small craft. The poet had returned to his usual post by the taffrail; and soon after Messina was spread out before us, with its magnificent harbour, quays, and palaces; it was a gorgeous sight, and the surrounding scenery was so diversified and magnificent that I exclaimed:

'Nature must have intended this for Paradise.'

'But the devil', observed the poet, 'has converted it into Hell.'

After some deliberation, the wind blowing fresh and fair, we reluctantly passed the city, and scudded through the straits along the grim and rugged shores of Calabria; at two p.m. we got into the vortex of another whirlpool, and the conflicting winds, currents, and waves contending for mastery, held us captive. Our vessel was unmanageable, and there we lay oscillating like a pendulum for two hours close to the rocks, seeing vessels half a mile from us scudding by under double-reefed topsails. The spell broken, we resumed our course. On passing a fortress called the Pharo, in the narrowest part of the

strait, we had a good view of Mount Etna, with its base wreathed in mists, while the summit stood out in bold relief against the sky. To the east we had the savage shores of Calabria, with its grey and jagged rocks; to the west the sunny and fertile coast of Sicily—gliding close by its smooth hills and sheltered coves. Byron would point to some serene nook, and exclaim: ‘There I could be happy!’

## CHAPTER XVIII

But let it go—it will one day be found  
With other relics of 'a former world',  
When this world shall be *former* underground,  
Thrown topsy-turvy, twisted, crisp'd, and curl'd,  
Baked, fried, and burnt, turn'd inside out or drown'd.

*Don Juan*—BYRON.

It was now the 30th July, twelve days since our departure from Genoa, our ship would do anything but go ahead, she was built on the lines of a baby's cradle, and the least touch of Neptune's foot set her rocking. I was glad of this, for it kept all the land-lubbers in their cribs. Byron was not at all affected by the motion, he improved amazingly in health and spirits, and said: 'On shore when I awake in the morning, I am always inclined to hang myself, as the day advances, I get better, and at midnight I am all cock-a-whoop. I am better now than I have been for years'. You never know a man's temper until you have been imprisoned in a ship with him, or a woman's until you have married her. Few friendships can stand the ordeal by water; when a yacht from England with a pair of these thus tried friends touches—say at Malta or Gibraltar—you may be sure that she will depart with one only. I never was on shipboard with a better companion than Byron, he was generally cheerful, gave no trouble, assumed no authority, uttered no complaints, and did not interfere with the working of the ship; when appealed to, he always answered: 'Do as you like'. Every day at noon he and I jumped overboard in defiance of sharks or weather; it was the only exercise he had, for he could not walk the deck. His favourite toys—pistols, were not forgotten; empty bottles and live poultry served as targets; a fowl, duck, or goose, was put into a basket, the head and neck only visible, hoisted to the main yard-arm: and we rarely had two shots at the same bird. No boy cornet enjoyed a practical joke more than Byron. On great occasions when our captain wished to be grand he wore a bright scarlet waistcoat; as he was very corpulent, Byron wished to see if this vest would not button round us both. The captain was taking his siesta one day when he persuaded the boy to bring up the waistcoat. In the meantime, as it was nearly calm

and very hot, I opened the coops of the geese and ducks, who instinctively took to the water. Neptune, the Newfoundland dog, jumped after them, and Moretto, the bulldog, followed him.

'Now,' said Byron, standing on the gangway, with one arm in the red waistcoat, 'put your arm in, Tre, we will jump overboard, and take the shine out of it.'

So we did.

The captain, hearing the row on deck, came up, and when he saw the gorgeous garment he was so proud of, defiled by sea water, he roared out: 'My lord, you should know better than to make a mutiny on board ship [the crew were laughing at the fun], I won't heave to, or lower a boat, I hope you will both be drowned'.

'Then you will lose your *frite*' (for so the captain always pronounced the word freight), shouted Byron.

As I saw the dogs worrying the ducks and geese, I returned on board with the waistcoat, pacified the skipper, lowered a boat, and with the aid of a boy, sculled after the birds and beasts; the Newfoundlander brought them to us unharmed, but Moretto the bulldog did not mouth them so tenderly. After the glare and oppressive heat of the day the evenings and nights were delightful: balmy air, no dew, and light enough to distinguish everything near.

Fletcher, Byron's 'yeoman bold', as was his custom in the afternoon, was squatted under the lee of the caboose, eating his supper, and drinking bottled porter which he dearly loved. I said: 'You are enjoying yourself, Fletcher'.

'Yes,' he answered, 'and you had better do so whilst you can: my master can't be right in his mind.'

'Why?' I asked.

'If he was, he would not have left Italy, where we had everything, and go to a country of savages; there is nothing to eat in Greece but tough billy goats, or to drink but spirits of turpentine. Why, sir, there is nothing there but rocks, robbers, and vermin.' Seeing his master coming up the companion ladder, he raised his voice: 'I defy my lord to deny it—you may ask him'.

'I don't deny it,' said Byron; 'what he says is quite true to those who take a hog's-eye view of things. But this I know, I have never been so happy as I was there; how it will be with me, now that my head is as grey, and my heart as hard, as the rocks, I can't say.'

I followed Fletcher's advice and example in regard to the supper, and the poet, saying he could not resist temptation,

joined me. We discussed the pleasures and independence of sea-life as contrasted with the eternal restraint and botheration on shore. Here, I observed, we have only the elements to contend with, and a safe port under our lee, whereas on shore we never know what mischief is brewing; a letter, or the idle gossip of a good-natured friend, stops our digestion—how smoothly the time glides on, now we are out of the reach of men and mischief-makers.

'Women, you should say,' exclaimed Byron; 'if we had a womankind on board she would set us all at loggerheads, and make a mutiny, would she not, captain?'

'I wish my old woman was here,' replied the skipper, 'she would make you as comfortable in my cabin at sea, as your own wife could in her parlour on shore.'

Byron started and looked savage—the captain went on, as unconscious of offending as a carthorse would be, after crushing your toes with his hoof. 'My wife,' he continued, 'on my last voyage from Rio, saved my ship. We had touched there for water, homeward bound: she waked me up at night—her weather eye was always open—the men were *desarting* in a crimp's shore-boat. In the morning it came on to blow like blazes.'

'If we are to have a yarn, captain, we must have strong waters.'

'I have no objection to a glass of grog,' said the captain; 'I am not a temperance man, but I can't *abide* drunkenness at sea. I like to have my allowance.'

'How much is that?' asked Byron.

'No more than will do me good.'

'How much is that?'

'Why, a bottle of good old Jamaica rum sarves me from eleven a.m. till ten p.m., and I know that can't hurt any man.'

Byron read a critique on O'Meara's *Napoleon at St. Helena* in the *Quarterly*. He remarked: 'If all they assert is true, it only affects the character of the author. They do not disprove a single statement in the book: this is their way! If they crush an author, it must be in the shell, as they tried to do with me: if the book has life enough to outlive the year it defies their malice—for who reads a last year's review? Whilst our literature is domineered over by a knot of virulent bigots and rancorous partisans, we shall have no great or original works. When did parsons patronize genius? If one of their black band dares to think for himself he is drummed out, or cast aside, like Sterne and Swift. Where are the great poets and writers the Reviewers



predicted were to be the leviathans of our literature? Extinct: their bones hereafter may be grubbed up in a fossil state with those of the reptiles that puffed them into life. If this age has produced anything good or great, which I doubt, it has been under every possible discouragement.

‘People say that I have told my own story in my writings: I defy them to point out a single act of my life by my poems, or of my thoughts, for I seldom write what I think. All that has been published about me is sheer nonsense, as will be seen at my death, when my real life is published: everything in that is true. When I first left England I was gloomy. I said so in my first canto of *Childe Harold*. I was then really in love with a cousin [Thirza, he was very chary of her name], and she was in a decline. On my last leaving England I was savage; there was enough to make me so. There is some truth as to detail in the *Dream*, and in some of my shorter poems. As to my marriage, which people made such ridiculous stories about, it was managed by Lady Jersey and others. I was perfectly indifferent on the subject; thought I could not do better, and so did they. I wanted money. It was an experiment, and proved a failure. Everything is told in my memoirs exactly as it happened. I told Murray Lady Byron was to read the MS. if she wished it, and requested she would add, omit, or make any comments she pleased, now, or when it was going through the press.’

It is strange that Byron, though professing to distrust everybody, should have had no misgiving as to the fate of his memoirs; he was glad Moore sold them to Murray, as he thought that ensured publication. He considered it indispensable to his honour that the truths he could not divulge during his life should be known at his death. He knew Moore prided himself on his intimacy with lords and ladies, for he was always talking of them, and that the chief aim and object of that poet’s whole life was pleasure at any price. Had he fulfilled his trust by giving Byron’s memoirs to the world, he would have compromised himself with society, as they contained many a reminiscence which would have cast a shadow on the fashionable circles which Tom Moore delighted to honour. When the question was raised after Byron’s death, of the publication or suppression of his memoirs, his friend Tom Moore acted as if he was quite indifferent on the subject; so he must have been, for although he permitted others to read them, he never found time to do so himself. He consulted the most fashionable man he knew on the subject, Luttrell, who, as Rogers says, ‘cared nothing about

the matter, and readily voted they should be put in the fire'. Byron said 'some few scenes and names in his memoirs it might be necessary to omit, as he had written the whole truth. Moore and Murray were to exercise their own discretion on that subject'. He added: 'That the truth would be known and believed when he was dead, and the lies forgotten'. So there is nothing to extenuate the great wrong done to Byron by Tom Moore.

Byron's autobiography contained a narrative of the principal events of his life; with running comments on those he came in contact with, or who crossed his path. It was written in a straightforward, manly manner, and in a vigorous, fearless style, and was apparently truthful as regarded himself; if it was not the whole truth, it contained much more of that commodity than other writers have generally left us in their memoirs. Autobiography was the kind of reading he preferred to all others.

## CHAPTER XIX

His life was one long war with self-sought foes,  
Or friends by him self-banished, for his mind  
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary.

*Childe Harold*—BYRON.

BYRON formed his opinion of the inhabitants of this planet from books; personally he knew as little about them as if he belonged and to some other. From reading Rochefoucauld, Machiavelli, other soured cynics, he learnt to distrust people in general; so, as he could do nothing without them, and did not know how to manage them, he was always complaining of being overreached, and never getting what he wanted. I don't think he ever knew what he did want: few there are that do.

To resume my log on board the good ship *Hercules*. On the 2nd August, the islands of Cephalonia and Zante were in sight, and shortly after Byron pointing out the Morea said: 'I don't know why it is, but I feel as if the eleven long years of bitterness I have passed through since I was here, were taken off my shoulders, and I was scudding through the Greek Archipelago with old Bathurst, in his frigate'. That night we anchored in the roadstead; the next morning we worked into Argostoli, the harbour of Cephalonia, and anchored near the town. An officer from the Health Office having examined our papers and log, gave us pratique. The secretary of the Resident, Captain Kennedy, came on board; he told us Colonel Napier was absent, but that we might depend on the colonel's readiness to aid us in anything that his orders to observe strict neutrality permitted. The captain gave us the latest news from the seat of war, and said Blaquiere had gone to England, at which Byron was sorely vexed. The truth flashed across his mind, that he had been merely used as a decoy by the committee. 'Now they have got me thus far they think I must go on, and they care nothing as to the result. They are deceived, I won't budge a foot farther until I see my way; we will stay here; if that is objected to I will buy an island from the Greeks or Turks; there must be plenty of them in the market.' The instinct that enables the vulture to detect carrion afar off, is surpassed by the marvellous acuteness of the Greeks in scenting money. The morning after our

arrival a flock of ravenous Zuliote refugees alighted on our decks, attracted by Byron's dollars. Legá, the steward, a thorough miser, coiled himself on the money-chest like a viper. Our sturdy skipper was for driving them overboard with hand-spikes. Byron came on deck in exuberant spirits, pleased with their savage aspect and wild attire, and, as was his wont, promised a great deal more than he should have done; day and night they clung to his heels like a pack of jackals, till he stood at bay like a hunted lion, and was glad to buy them off, by shipping them to the Morea. On Colonel Napier's return to the island he warmly urged Byron, and indeed all of us, to take up our quarters at his house; from first to last all the English on the island, the military as well as the civilians, vied with each other in friendly and hospitable acts. Byron preferred staying on board; every afternoon he and I crossed the harbour in a boat, and landed on a rock to bathe; on one of these occasions he held out his right leg to me, saying:

'I hope this accursed limb will be knocked off in the war.'

'It won't improve your swimming,' I answered; 'I will exchange legs if you will give me a portion of your brains.'

'You would repent your bargain,' he said; 'at times I feel my brains boiling, as Shelley's did whilst you were grilling him.'

After bathing we landed in an olive grove, eating our frugal supper under the trees. Our Greek passengers during the voyage said that the Greeks generally were in favour of a monarchical government; the Greeks on the island confirmed this, saying it was the only way of getting rid of the robber chiefs who now tyrannized and kept the country in a state of anarchy; and as they must have a foreigner for a king, they could not do better than elect Byron. The poet treated this suggestion lightly, saying: 'If they make me the offer, I may not refuse it. I shall take care of my own "sma peculiar"; for if it don't suit my humour, I shall, like Sancho, abdicate'. Byron several times alluded to this, in a bantering vein; it left an impression on his mind. Had he lived to reach the congress of Salona as commissioner of the loan, the dispenser of a million silver crowns would have been offered a golden one.

Our party made an excursion to the neighbouring island of Ithaca; contrasted with the arid wastes and barren red hills of Cephalonia, the verdant valleys, sparkling streams, and high land, clothed in evergreen shrubs, were strikingly beautiful. After landing, it was proposed to Byron to visit some of the localities that antiquaries have dubbed with the titles of Homer's

school—Ulysses's stronghold, etc.: he turned peevishly away, saying to me: 'Do I look like one of those emasculated fogies? Let's have a swim. I detest antiquarian twaddle. Do people think I have no lucid intervals, that I came to Greece to scribble more nonsense? I will show then I can do something better: I wish I had never written a line, to have it cast in my teeth at every turn'. Brown and Gamba went to look for some place where we might pass the night, as we could not get mules to go on until the next day.

After a long swim Byron clambered up the rocks, and, exhausted by his day's work, fell asleep under the shade of a wild fig-tree at the mouth of a cavern. Gamba, having nothing to do, hunted him out, and awakened him from a pleasant dream, for which the poet cursed him. We fed off figs and olives, and passed our night at a goatherd's cottage.

In the morning we rode through the pleasant little island to Vathy, the capital. The Resident, Captain Knox, his lady, and every one else who had a house, opened their doors to welcome us, and the pilgrim was received as if he had been a prince. On the summit of a high mountain in the island there is an ancient monastery, from which there is a magnificent view of the Ionian Sea, Greece, and many islands. The day after our arrival we ascended it, our party amounting to ten or twelve, including servants and muleteers. As usual, it was late when we started; there was not a breath of air, and the heat was intense. Following a narrow zig-zag path between rocks and precipices in single file, as our mules crept upwards our difficulty increased, until the path became merely stone steps, worn by time and travel in the solid limestone. We all dismounted but Byron; he was jaded and irritable, as he generally was when deprived of his accustomed midday siesta: it was dusk before we reached the summit of the mountain. The abbot had been apprised by the Resident of our visit; and when we neared the monastery files of men stood on each side of our path, bearing pine torches. On coming up to the walls we saw the monks in their grey gowns, ranged along the terrace; they chanted a hymn of glorification and welcome to the great lord, saying: 'Christ has risen to elevate the cross and trample on the crescent in our beloved Greece'. The abbot, clad in his sacerdotal robes, received Byron in the porch, and conducted him into the great hall, illuminated for the occasion; the monks and others clustered round the honoured guest; boys swung censers with frankincense under the poet's nose. The abbot, after performing a variety of ceremonies in a

very dignified manner, took from the folds of his ample garments a roll of paper, and commenced intoning through his nasal organs a turgid and interminable eulogium on my 'Lordo Inglese', in a polyglot of divers tongues; while the eyes of the silent monks, anxious to observe the effect of the holy father's eloquence, glanced from the abbot to the lord.

Byron had not spoken a word from the time we entered the monastery; I thought he was resolved to set us an example of proper behaviour. No one was more surprised than I was, when suddenly he burst into a paroxysm of rage, and vented his ire in a torrent of Italian execrations on the holy abbot and all his brotherhood. Then turning to us with flashing eyes he vehemently exclaimed:

'Will no one release me from the presence of these pestilential idiots? they drive me mad!' Seizing a lamp he left the room.

The consternation of the monks at this explosion of wrath may be imagined. The amazed abbot remained for some time motionless, his eyes and mouth wide open; holding the paper he had been reading in the same position, he looked at the vacant place left by Byron, and then at the door through which he had disappeared. At last he thought he had solved the mystery, and in a low tremulous voice said—significantly putting his finger to his forehead:

'Eccolo, è matto poveretto!' (Poor fellow, he is mad).

Leaving Hamilton Brown to pacify the monks, I followed Byron. He was still fretting and fuming, cursing the 'whining dotard', as he called the abbot, who had tormented him. Byron's servant brought him bread, wine, and olives. I left him and joined the mess of the monks in their refectory. We had the best of everything the island produced for supper. Our host broached several flasks of his choicest vintages: but although he partook largely of these good things, they failed to cheer him. We were all glad to retire early to our cells.

In the morning Byron came forth refreshed, and acted as if he had forgotten the occurrences of the evening. The abbot had not, and he took care not to remind him of them. A handsome donation was deposited in the alms-box, and we mounted our mules and departed, without any other ceremony than a hasty benediction from the holy father and his monks. However we might have doubted the sincerity of their ovation on receiving us, we did not question the relief they felt and expressed by their looks on our departure.

The next day we retraced our steps through the flowery

ravines and tranquil glades of this lovely islet, our road winding along the foot of the mountains. The grey olive trees, bright green fig and rampant vine, that grew above our heads, screened us from the sun; the fresh breeze from the sea, with the springs of purest water gushing out of the rocks, soothed the poet's temper. He turned out of the path to look at a natural grotto, in a grove of forest trees, and said: 'You will find nothing in Greece or its islands so pleasant as this. If this isle were mine—"I would break my staff and bury my book"—What fools we all are!'

On reaching our former landing-place we had to wait a long time for a boat to ferry us across the strait to Cephalaria. As usual he and I took to the water; in the evening we crossed, and it was night when we regained our old quarters on board the *Hercules*.

It was near noon of the next day when I had occasion to speak to Byron on pressing business. I descended to his cabin—he was fast asleep. I repeatedly called him by name; at first in a low voice—then louder and louder; at last he started up in terror, staring at me wildly. With a convulsive sigh he said: 'I have had such a dream! I am trembling with fear. I am not fit to go to Greece. If you had come to strangle me I could have done nothing'.

I said: 'Who could against a nightmare? the hag don't mind your pistols or your Bible' (he always had these on a chair close to the side of his bed). I then talked on other subjects until he was tolerably composed, and so left him.

The conflicting accounts that came day by day from the Morea distracted us; to ascertain the real state of things, I proposed to go there. Byron urged me to stay until he went, so I remained for some time; but when he talked of leaving the ship and taking a house I determined to be off.

## CHAPTER XX

Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,  
There is a moral desert now;  
The mean and miserable huts,  
Contrasted with those ancient fanes,  
The long and lonely colonnades,  
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks.

*Queen Mab*—SHELLEY.

I WELL knew that once on shore Byron would fall back on his old routine of dawdling habits, plotting — planning — shilly-shallying—and doing nothing. It was a maxim of his: ‘If I am stopped for six days at any place, I cannot be made to move for six months’.

Hamilton Brown agreed to go with me; he was a most valuable ally. In my hasty preparations for going I was tearing up and throwing overboard papers and letters. Byron stopped me, saying: ‘Some day you will be sorry for this; they are parts of your life. I have every scrap of paper that was ever written to me—letters, notes—even cards of invitation to parties. There are chests-full at Hansom’s, Douglas Kinnaird’s, and Barry’s, at Genoa. They will edify my executors’.

‘Is this quite fair to your correspondents?’ I asked.

‘Yes; for they have mine and might use them against me. Whilst I live they dare not—I can keep them all in order; when I die and my memoirs are published—my executors can verify them by my letters if their truth is questioned.’

I told Byron that two Frenchmen, just landed, wished to see him; I thought they were officers. He said: ‘Ask Hamilton Brown to see what they want. I can’t express myself like a gentleman in French. I never could learn it—or anything else according to rule’. He even read translations of French books in preference to the originals. His ignorance of the language was the reason that he avoided Frenchmen and was never in France.

In our voyage from Italy Byron persuaded me to let him have my black servant, as, in the East, it is a mark of dignity to have a negro in your establishment. He likewise coveted a green embroidered military jacket of mine; which, as it was too small



for me, I gave him; so I added considerably to his dignity. I engaged one of the refugee Zuliotes (or Zodiacs, as old Scott, our captain, called them) to go with me. He was a vain, lazy, swaggering braggart—sullen and stupid as are most of his tribe.

Byron gave us letters addressed to the Greek government, if we could find any such constituted authorities—expressing his readiness to serve them when they had satisfied him how he could do so, etc. As I took leave of him, his last words were: 'Let me hear from you often—come back soon. If things are farcical they will do for *Don Juan*; if heroical, you shall have another canto of *Childe Harold*'.

Hamilton Brown and I went on board a light boat of the country, called a caique, crossed over with a fair wind in the night, and landed early the next morning on a sandy beach, at a solitary ruined tower near Pyrgos. A dirty squad of Moorish mercenaries, quartered at the tower, received us; some of them accompanied us to the village of Pyrgos, where, as we could not procure horses or mules, we slept.

In the morning we commenced our journey to Tripolitza, the capital of the Peloponnesus, visiting the military stations on our way. We slept at the ruined villages, and were generally well received when our mission was known. The country is so poor and barren that but for its genial climate it would be barely habitable. In the best of times there would not be plenty; but now that war had passed over the land with fire and slaughter there was scarcely a vestige of habitation or cultivation.

The only people we met besides soldiers looked like tribes of half-starved gipsies; over our heads, on some towering rock, occasionally we saw a shepherd with his long gun, watching us, and keeping guard over small flocks of goats and sheep, whilst they fed off the scanty shrubs that grew in the crevices under them; they were attended, too, by packs of the most savage dogs I ever saw. Except in considerable force the Greek soldiers dared not meddle with these warlike shepherds and their flocks. Many of the most distinguished leaders in the war, and the bravest of their followers, had been shepherds.

To compensate for the hard fare and bodily privations to be endured, there was ample food for the minds of any who love the haunts of genius. Every object we saw was associated with some great name, or deed of arts or arms, that still live in the memory of all mankind. We stopped two or three days at Tripolitza, and then passed on to Argos and Napoli di Romania; every step of our way was marked by the ravages of the war. On our way

to Corinth we passed through the defiles of Dervenakia; our road was a mere mule-path for about two leagues, winding along in the bed of a brook, flanked by rugged precipices. In this gorge, and a more rugged path above it, a large Ottoman force, principally cavalry, had been stopped, in the previous autumn, by barricades of rocks and trees, and slaughtered like droves of cattle, by the wild and exasperated Greeks. It was a perfect picture of the war, and told its own story; the sagacity of the nimble-footed Greeks, and the hopeless stupidity of the Turkish commanders, were palpable: detached from the heaps of dead we saw the skeletons of some bold riders who had attempted to scale the acclivities, still astride the skeletons of their horses, and in the rear, as if in the attempt to back out of the fray, the bleached bones of the negroes' hands still holding the hair ropes attached to the skulls of their camels—death, like sleep, is a strange posture-master. There were grouped in a narrow space five thousand or more skeletons of men, horses, camels, and mules; vultures had eaten their flesh, and the sun had bleached their bones. In this picture the Turks looked like a herd of bisons trapped and butchered in the gorges of the Rocky Mountains. The rest of their battles, amidst scenery generally of the same rugged character, only differed in their magnitude. The Asiatic Turks are lazy, brave, and stupid. The Greeks, too crafty to fight if they could run, were only formidable in their fastnesses. It is a marvel that Greece and Greeks should be again resuscitated after so many ages of death-like slavery. No people, if they retain their name and language, need despair; 'There is nothing constant but mutability!'

We arrived at Corinth a short time after the Acrocorinthus had, for the second time, fallen into the hands of the insurgents; and there saw Colocotroni and other predatory chiefs. Thence we crossed to the Isle of Salamis, and found the legislative and executive bodies of the provisional government accusing each other of embezzling the public money. Here, too, we saw the most potent leaders of the chief Greek military factions—Primates, Hydriotes, Mainotes, Mareotes, Ipsareotes, Caudeotes, and many others, each and all intent on their own immediate interests. There, too, I saw the first specimens of the super-subtle Phanariotes, pre-eminent in all evil, reared at Constantinople, and trained in the arts of deception by the most adroit professors in the world. These pliant and dexterous intriguers glided stealthily from tent to tent and from chief to chief, impregnating their brains with wily suggestions, thus

envenoming their feuds and causing universal anarchy. Confounded at this exhibition of rank selfishness, we backed out of these civil broils, and sailed for Hydra; one of our commissions being to send deputies from that island to England to negotiate a loan. We speedily accomplished this, and Hamilton Brown went to London with the deputies. I relanded in Greece and went to Athens. Odysseus held undisputed sway there and in Eastern Greece, the frontiers of the war, and had played an important part in the insurrection. Descended from the most renowned race of Klephtes, he was a master of the art of mountain warfare, and a thorough Greek in cunning; strong-bodied, nimble-footed, and nimble-witted. I bought horses, hired soldiers, and accompanied him on an expedition to Eubœa, then in the hands of the Turks; and under his auspices became familiar with many of the most interesting localities—Attica, Marathon, Thebes, Thermopylæ, Cheronea, Livadia, Talanta, Mount Parnes, Pindus and Cythæron. Our headquarters were on Parnassus. Our ambushes, onslaughts, rock-fighting, forays, stalking Turkish cavalry, successes and failures, intermingled with conferences, treaties, squabbles, intrigues, and constant change, were exciting at the time: so is deer-stalking; so was the Caffre war to those engaged in it; but as they are neither edifying nor amusing to write nor to read about, I shall not record them. In January 1824 I heard that Byron was at Missolonghi; that a loan was about being negotiated in London, and that Colonel Stanhope and other English had arrived in Athens. I pressed upon Odysseus the necessity of our instantly returning thither, which we did. Shortly after Stanhope proposed, and Odysseus agreed, to hold a congress at Salona, and that I should go to Missolonghi to invite Byron and the chiefs of Western Greece to attend it. I started on my mission with a band of followers; and we had been two days winding through the mountain passes—for nothing can induce the Greeks to cross level ground if there are Turks or the rumour of enemies near—when a messenger from Missolonghi on his way to Salona, conveying the startling news of Byron's death, crossed our path, as we were fording the river Evvenus. Thus, by a stroke of fate, my hopes of being of use in Greece were extinguished: Byron and Stanhope, as commissioners of the loan, would have expended it on the war; and the sordid and selfish Primates, Machiavellian Phanariotes, and lawless Captanria would have been held in check. Byron thought all men rogues, and put no trust in any. As applied to Greeks, his scepticism was perfect wisdom. Stanhope was of a

frank and hopeful nature; he had carefully examined the state of things, and would have been an able coadjutor, for he possessed those inestimable qualities—energy, temper, and order—which Byron lacked. The first thing Stanhope did was to establish a free press: many opposed this as premature, if not dangerous, but it was of eminent service, and the only institution founded at that time which struck root deep into the soil.

Colonel Stanhope gave me the following note to Byron, but the colonel's prophetic warning was too late:

SALONA, 17 *April*, 1824.

MY DEAR LORD BYRON,

We are all assembled here with the exception of your Lordship and Monsieur Mavrocordato. I hope you will both join us; indeed, after the strong pledges given, the President ought to attend. As for you, you are a sort of Wilberforce, a saint whom all parties are endeavouring to seduce; it's a pity that you are not divisible, that every prefecture might have a fraction of your person. For my own part I wish to see you fairly out of Missolonghi, because your health will not stand the climate and the constant anxiety to which you are there subjected.

I shall remain here till we receive your and the President's answer; I mean then to go to Egina, Zante, and England. If I can be of any service, you may command my zealous services.

Once more, I implore you to quit Missolonghi, and not to sacrifice your health and, perhaps, your life in that Bog.

I am ever your most devoted,

LEICESTER STANHOPE.

## CHAPTER XXI

Arnold!—Do you—dare you—  
Taunt me with my born deformity.

*Deformed Transformed*—BYRON.

WITH desponding thoughts I entered Missolonghi on the third day from my leaving Salona. Any spot on the surface of the earth, or in its bowels, that holds out a prospect of gain, you will find inhabited; a morass that will produce rice, the crust of a volcano in which the vine will grow; lagunes, in which fish abound, are temptations which overcome the terror of pestilence or death. So I was not surprised at seeing Missolonghi, situated as it is on the verge of the most dismal swamp I had ever seen. The marvel was that Byron, prone to fevers, should have been induced to land on this mudbank, and stick there for three months shut in by a circle of stagnant pools which might be called the belt of death. Although it was now the early spring, I found most of the strangers suffering from gastric fevers. It was the 24th or 25th April when I arrived; Byron had died on the 19th. I waded through the streets, between wind and water, to the house he had lived in; it was detached, and on the margin of the shallow slimy sea-waters. For three months this house had been besieged, day and night, like a bank that has a run upon it. Now that death had closed the door, it was as silent as a cemetery. No one was within the house but Fletcher, of which I was glad. As if he knew my wishes, he led me up a narrow stair into a small room, with nothing in it but a coffin standing on trestles. No word was spoken by either of us; he withdrew the black pall and the white shroud, and there lay the embalmed body of the pilgrim—more beautiful in death than in life. The contraction of the muscles and skin had effaced every line that time or passion had ever traced on it; few marble busts could have matched its stainless white, the harmony of its proportions, and perfect finish; yet he had been dissatisfied with that body, and longed to cast its slough. How often I had heard him curse it! He was jealous of the genius of Shakespeare—that might well be—but where had he seen the face or form worthy to excite his envy? I asked Fletcher to bring me a glass

of water. On his leaving the room, to confirm or remove my doubts as to the cause of his lameness, I uncovered the pilgrim's feet, and was answered—the great mystery was solved. Both his feet were clubbed, and his legs withered to the knee—the form and features of an Apollo, with the feet and legs of a sylvan satyr. This was a curse, chaining a proud and soaring spirit like his to the dull earth. In the drama of *The Deformed Transformed*, I knew that he had expressed all he could express of what a man of highly-wrought mind might feel when brooding over a deformity of body: but when he said:

I have done the best which spirit may to make  
Its way with all deformity, dull deadly,  
Discouraging weight upon me,

I thought it exaggerated as applied to himself; now I saw it was not so. His deformity was always uppermost in his thoughts, and influenced every act of his life, spurred him on to poetry, as that was one of the few paths to fame open to him—and as if to be revenged on Nature for sending him into the world 'scarce half made up', he scoffed at her works and traditions with the pride of Lucifer; this morbid feeling ultimately goaded him on to his last Quixotic crusade in Greece.

No other man, afflicted as he was, could have been better justified than Byron in saying:

I ask not  
For valour, since deformity is daring;  
It is its essence to o'ertake mankind  
By heart and soul, and make itself the equal—  
Ay, the superior of the rest. There is  
A spur in its halt movements, to become  
All that the others cannot, in such things  
As still are free to both, to compensate  
For step-dame Nature's niggardness at first;  
They war with fearless deeds, the smiles of fortune,  
And oft, like Timour the lame Tartar, win them.

Knowing and sympathizing with Byron's sensitiveness, his associates avoided prying into the cause of his lameness; so did strangers, from good breeding or common humanity. It was generally thought his halting gait originated in some defect of the right foot or ankle—the right foot was the most distorted, and it had been made worse in his boyhood by vain efforts to set it right. He told me that for several years he wore steel splints, which so wrenched the sinews and tendons of his leg that they increased his lameness; the foot was twisted inwards, only the edge touched the ground, and that leg was shorter than the other. His shoes were peculiar—very high heeled, with the

soles uncommonly thick on the inside and pared thin on the outside—the toes were stuffed with cotton-wool, and his trousers were very large below the knee and strapped down so as to cover his feet. The peculiarity of his gait was now accounted for; he entered a room with a sort of run, as if he could not stop, then planted his best leg well forward, throwing back his body to keep his balance. In early life whilst his frame was light and elastic, with the aid of a stick he might have tottered along for a mile or two; but after he had waxed heavier, he seldom attempted to walk more than a few hundred yards, without squatting down or leaning against the first wall, bank, rock, or tree at hand, never sitting on the ground, as it would have been difficult for him to get up again. In the company of strangers, occasionally, he would make desperate efforts to conceal his infirmity, but the hectic flush on his face, his swelling veins, and quivering nerves betrayed him, and he suffered for many days after such exertions. Disposed to fatten, incapable of taking exercise to check the tendency, what could he do? If he added to his weight his feet would not have supported him; in this dilemma he was compelled to exist in a state of semi-starvation; he was less than eleven stone when at Genoa, and said he had been fourteen at Venice. The pangs of hunger which travellers and shipwrecked mariners have described were nothing to what he suffered; their privations were temporary, his were for life, and more unendurable, as he was in the midst of abundance. I was exclaiming: ‘Poor fellow, if your errors were greater than those of ordinary men, so were your temptations and provocations’, when Fletcher returned with a bottle and glass, saying: ‘There is nothing but slimy salt water in this horrid place, so I have been half over the town to beg this bottle of porter’, and, answering my ejaculation of ‘Poor fellow!’ he said:

‘You may well say so, sir, these savages are worse than any highwaymen; they have robbed my lord of all his money and his life too.’

Whilst saying this, Fletcher, without making any remark, drew the shroud and pall carefully over the feet of his master’s corpse—he was very nervous and trembled as he did it; so strongly had his weak and superstitious nature been acted upon by the injunctions and threats of his master that, alive or dead, no one was to see his feet, for if they did he would haunt him, etc.

Fletcher gave me a sheet of paper, and from his dictation I wrote on Byron’s coffin the particulars of his last illness and death. This account differs in many particulars from the one

already published; in the same way that the fresh rough notes of an eye-witness, taken on the spot, differ on passing through the hands of the editor of a review to be served out to the public as an article to serve a cause or strengthen a faction—so let it be, I shall not question it.

A letter from his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, was on his writing-table. This lady was the only relation Byron had, or at least acknowledged; and he always spoke of her in the most affectionate terms. He was in the act of writing to her when he was taken ill. This unfinished letter I copied—as the original would run many risks of being lost before it reached its destination. It is interesting as the last of Byron's writings—as an index, too, of his real and inward feelings; those letters that have been published were written, as I have already observed, under an assumed character and for effect.

His sister's letter contained a long transcript of one from Lady Byron; with a minute mental and physical account of their child, Ada. Lady Byron's letter mentioned a profile of the child. I found it, with other tokens that the pilgrim had most treasured, scattered on the floor—as rubbish of no marketable value, and trampled on. I rescued from destruction a cambric handkerchief stained with his blood, and marked with a lady's name in hair; a ringlet; a ribbon; and a small glove. These relics I folded up with some of his own hair that I had shorn from his head.

This unfinished letter was the last of Byron's writings; it is to his half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

MY DEAREST AUGUSTA,

MISSOLONGHI, *Feb. 23rd, 1824.*

I received a few days ago, your and Lady B.'s report of Ada's health, with other letters from England; for which I ought to be, and am (I hope) sufficiently thankful, as they are of great comfort and I wanted some, having been recently unwell—but am now much better, so that you must not be alarmed.

You will have heard of our journeys and escapes, and so forth—perhaps with some exaggeration; but it is all very well now, and I have been some time in Greece, which is in as good a state as could be expected considering circumstances. But I will not plague you with politics—wars—or earthquakes, though we have had a rather smart one three nights ago, which produced a scene ridiculous enough, as no damage was done, except to those who stuck fast in the scuffle to get first out of the doors or windows; amongst whom, some recent importations from England, who had been used to quieter elements, were rather squeezed in the press for precedence.

I have been obtaining the release of about nine-and-twenty Turkish prisoners—men, women, and children, and have sent them,



at my own expense, home to their friends; but one pretty little girl of nine years of age, named Hato or Hatagée, has expressed a strong wish to remain with me or under my care—and I have nearly determined to adopt her, if I thought that Lady B. would let her come to England as a companion to Ada (they are about the same age), and we could easily provide for her—if not, I can send her to Italy for education. She is very lively and quick, and with great black Oriental eyes and Asiatic features. All her brothers were killed in the revolution. Her mother wishes to return to her husband, who is at Previsa; but says that she would rather entrust the child to me in the present state of the country. Her extreme youth and sex have hitherto saved her life, but there is no saying what might happen in the course of the war (and of such a war). I shall probably commit her to the care of some English lady in the islands for the present. The child herself has the same wish, and seems to have a decided character for her age. You can mention this matter if you think it worth while. I merely wish her to be respectably educated and treated; and if my years and all things be considered—I presume it would be difficult to conceive me to have any other views

With regard to Ada's health, I am glad to hear that she is so much better; but I think it right that Lady B. should be informed and guard against it accordingly; that her description of much of her disposition and tendencies very nearly resemble that of my own at a similar age—except that I was much more impetuous. Her preference of *prose* (strange as it may now seem) *was*, and indeed *is*, mine (for I hate reading verse—and always did); and I never invented anything but 'boats—ships', and generally something relative to the ocean. I showed the report to Colonel Stanhope, who was struck with the resemblance of parts of it to the paternal line—even now.

But it is also fit, though unpleasant, that I should mention—that my recent attack, and a very severe one—had a strong appearance of epilepsy—why, I know not—for it is late in life. Its first appearance at thirty-six, and, so far as I *know*, it is *not* hereditary—and it is that it may not *become* so, that you should tell Lady B. to take some precautions in the case of Ada.

My attack has not returned—and I am fighting it off with abstinence and exercise, and thus far with success—if merely casual, it is all very well——

Gordon, in his *History of the Greek Revolution*, speaking of Byron just before his death, says:

His health declined, and we cannot be surprised, considering what he had suffered, and was daily suffering, from the deceptions practised upon him, and importunate solicitations for money. Parry talked a great deal and did little; Mavrocordato promised everything, and performed nothing, and the Primates, who engaged to furnish 1,500 dollars towards the expenses of the fortifications, could not produce a farthing, and in lieu thereof presented him with the freedom of the town. The streets and country were a bed of mire, so he could not take any exercise out of doors.

To return to what passed in Byron's house. On hearing a noise below I went down into the public room, and found Parry with a comrade carousing. This man (Parry) had been a clerk in the civil department of the Ordnance at Woolwich, and was sent out by the committee with the munitions of war, as head fire-master. In revolutions, however severely the body may suffer for want of pay and rations, your vanity is pampered to satiety by the assumption of whatever rank or title you may have a fancy for. Mavrocordato dubbed himself prince; Byron, commander-in-chief; Parry the ordnance clerk, major.

I said: 'Well, major, what do you think was the cause of Lord Byron's death?'

'Think? I don't think anything about it; I am a practical man, not a humbugging thinker; he would have been alive now if he had followed my advice. He lived too low: I told him so a thousand times. Two or three days before he slipped his wind, he said: "Parry, what do you think is the matter with me, the doctors don't know my complaint?" No, I said, nor nothing else, my lord; let me throw them out of the window. "What will do me good, Parry?" Brandy, my lord; nothing but brandy will save you; you have only got a chill on an empty stomach; let me mix you a stiff glass of grog, and you will be all right to-morrow, but he shook his head, so I gave him up as a lost man. My father', he continued, 'lived to a great age on brandy, and then he would not have died, but the doctor stopped his drink, and the death-rattle choked his scuppers.'

'What did the doctors do, Parry, with Lord Byron?'

'Do! why they physicked and bled him to death. My lord called them assassins to their faces, and so they are. A pair of more conceited ignorant scamps I never saw; they are only fit to stand at the corners of alleys to distribute Doctor Eady's handbills.'

The fire-master was a rough burly fellow, never quite sober, but he was no fool, and had a fund of pot-house stories which he told in appropriately slang language; he was a mimic, and amused Byron by burlesquing Jeremy Bentham and other members of the Greek committee. Besides these accomplishments he professed a thorough knowledge of the art of fortification, and said he was the inventor of shells and fire-balls that would destroy the Ottoman fleet and the garrison of Lepanto. All he did, however, was to talk and drink. He was three months in Greece, returned to England, talked the committee out of £400 for his services, and drank himself into a

madhouse. When he could get no more brandy to keep down the death-rattle he died as he said his father had done. Six artificers whom he brought to Greece with him stayed there only a fortnight, and cost the committee £340.

Out of the first loan of £800,000, negotiated in England, the Greeks got £240,000. The money Byron advanced by way of loan was repaid by the Greeks; but I believe it was invested in the Greek loan, and so lost.

## CHAPTER XXII

When a man hath no freedom to fight for at home,  
Let him combat for that of his neighbours;  
Let him think of the glories of Greece and of Rome,  
And get knock'd on the head for his labours.

*Don Juan*—BYRON.

EARLY in the morning Gamba and I looked over Byron's papers; there were several journals and notebooks; they contained memorandums of his thoughts, not of his actions—violent invectives on the Zuliotes and others—Italian and English letters, fifteen stanzas of the seventeenth canto of *Don Juan*, dated 8th May, several songs finished, and sundry beginnings of poems, his opinions of Napoleon's banishment, continuations of *Childe Harold*, and the *Deformed Transformed*, and other fragments. Mavrocordato came in; finally we sealed up everything. The 30,000 or 40,000 dollars which Byron had brought with him to Missolonghi were reduced to 5,000 or 6,000. Mavrocordato urged that this sum should be left with him as a loan, and that he would be responsible for its repayment. I objected to this as illegal, and insisted on the money being shipped to the Ionian Islands. The prince was exceedingly put out at this; he evidently thought my scruples arose from no other motive than personal enmity to him. The congress at Salona he considered a scheme of mine to get Byron out of his hands, and to deliver him, Mavrocordato, into the clutches of Odysseus, and he was in great terror of that chief. These things I could see engendered in his mind a deadly hatred of me. After the consummate art which this prince of Phanariotes had displayed in inveigling Byron and his dollars into Missolonghi, he looked upon him as a lawful prize, and on my efforts to rescue his victim as the height of audacity. I had no enmity to the prince, but I had a strong feeling of goodwill towards Byron; and never lost sight of his interest. To be brief, my plan had been simply this, to get Byron to Athens; Odysseus, whose confidence I had won, engaged to deliver up the Acropolis of that city, to put the said fortress into my hands the instant Byron promised to come there, and to allow me to garrison it with my own people and hold it; with no other condition than that of not

giving it up to the Greek government as at the time constituted. There the poet would have been in his glory; he loved Athens. In that fortress with a Frank garrison he would have been thoroughly independent; he would have been safe from fevers, for it is the healthiest site in the world, as well as the most beautiful. If the Greeks succeeded in raising a loan, and he was appointed to control its expenditure, at Athens he would have been in a commanding position: aloof from the sordid civil and military factions, he might have controlled them—Byron was no soldier:

Nor the division of a battle knew more than a spinster.

To carry on the war a disciplined army and an able general were indispensable. Sir C. J. Napier was the man exactly fitted for such an emergency; skilful, fearless, prompt, and decided as fate. The deep interest that great soldier felt in the cause of the Greeks was such, that he would have undertaken the war, although it would have cost him his commission in the British service, if solicited by the proper authorities, and furnished with sufficient means and power. When Byron was on his death-bed, and wandering in his mind, Napier was uppermost in his thoughts; he cursed the mercenary and turbulent Zuliotes, exclaiming: 'When Napier comes I will have them all flayed alive'.

In one of my visits to Cephalonia, expressly to inform Napier of the state of anarchy in Greece, I told him the first duty he would have to perform would be that of shooting and imprisoning half a dozen of the most refractory of the leaders of factions, as well as of the Captanria.

'No,' he said, 'you shall do that; you shall be Provost Marshal. If I go there we will raise the price of hemp; and I won't go without two European regiments, money in hand to pay them, and a portable gallows.'

'I will accept the office, and do my duty,' I answered.

To resume my story. After I had seen Byron's effects dispatched to Zante, I left Missolonghi to return to Salona. Many of the foreign soldiers who had been in Byron's pay, now that pay was stopped, volunteered to join me. I engaged as many as I could afford to keep. I had, likewise, five brass guns, with ammunition, and some other things sent out by the English committee, which I was authorized to take to Eastern Greece. Mavrocordato opposed this order—but I enforced it; so that I had now a cavalcade of fifty or sixty horses and mules, and about

a hundred men, including the Roumeliotes whom I had brought with me. In all my motley squad there was only one who spoke English, and he was a Scot. It would have been better had I omitted that one. When I arrived at Salona I found Stanhope and a host of others who had come to meet Byron. Stanhope had received a letter from the Horse Guards ordering him home.

I had now no motive for remaining in Greece. The Greeks were jealous of foreigners; those who had not money wandered about in rags and wretchedness, although many of them were very able soldiers, and had greatly distinguished themselves. But I did not like deserting Odysseus; he was very anxious I should stay. He said: 'The Greeks were naturally treacherous, artful, sordid, and fickle; and that history and tradition proved they had always been so'.

The congress dispersed. I returned with Odysseus into Livadia, and we revisited Athens and Eubœa—carrying on the war in the same inefficient and desultory way as before, unaided by the government and abandoned to our own resources. Hitherto the military chiefs held all the real power in Greece; the territory they wrested from the Turks they considered as lawful prize: in short, they acted on

The good old rule, the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.

As to the government it was a mere farce, but its members knew it might one day become a reality. Their chief occupation consisted in raising money from those few spots not previously ravaged by the ruthless soldiers. The insignificant revenue thus raised they appropriated to their own uses.

They were now assembled at Nauplia. An English vessel arrived in that port with £40,000 assigned to them—this being the first instalment of the Greek loan. The rush to the diggings in California and Australia, on the first discovery of gold in those regions, was partial, if not orderly, as compared with the wild and universal rush of the Greeks on Nauplia. That town was beleaguered by armed legions of robbers, frantically clamouring for their share of the spoil. Their military leaders soon found, not only that they should get no money, but that they were in imminent peril of losing their heads.

The government determined to rule with a strong hand, and to crush their military rivals. They commenced organizing a force and inveigling the men from their chiefs; they attempted to assassinate Odysseus, and were plotting to seize the great

Moreote chieftain, Colocotroni—so the great captains fled to their mountain strongholds. The government ultimately arrested Colocotroni and many others.

I remained with a hundred men between Livadia and Mount Parnes. Odysseus joined me there, and gave me an account of the state of things at Nauplia.

He said: 'By stratagem and force, with my own small means, I have kept the Turks out of the Morea for three years without aid from the government. The territory we captains have dispossessed the Sultan of, our self-elected government have sold to the Russians; and with the money they are to get rid of us, to make way for a foreign king and foreign soldiers'.

I asked: 'What king?'

He said they were 'divided on that subject, but the Russian party was the strongest, for they had the priests, the Phanariotes and Moreotes, with them; but', he added, 'what puzzles me is, that England should advance money to make Greece a hospodariot of Russia. I never met any Greek who could understand the reason why so shrewd a nation of traffickers as the English should lend them such large sums of money, since every one must know, they said, that they neither could nor would repay any portion of it'.

I urged Odysseus to resign his command, and with a few followers to retire to the mountains—adding that 'borrowed money in the hands of a knavish government would soon vanish'.

Odysseus said: 'This part of the country, Livadia, my father inherited from his father, who won it by his valour, and when it was lost through the treachery of the Venetians, who sold my father to the Sultan, I regained it by my wits, and have kept it with my sword'.

'And so you may again, if you are dispossessed now,' I answered, 'if you bide your time.'

How can a soldier, with nothing but his sword, defend himself against infernal machinations devised by a prince of Hell, armed with a chest of gold? Phanariotes, like devils, work in the dark!

In one of the precipices of Mount Parnassus, in Livadia, the highest mountain in Greece, there is a cavern, at an elevation of a thousand feet above the plain. This cavern Odysseus had, with great ingenuity, managed to ascend, and convert into a place of safety for his family and effects during the war. The only access to it was by ladders, bolted to the rock. The first ladder, forty-five or fifty feet in length, was placed against the face of the rock, and steadied by braces; a second, resting on a

projecting crag, crossed the first; and a third, lighter and shorter, stood on its heel on a natural shelf in the fractured stone. This third ladder led to a trap-door; the bolts and bars of which being removed, you entered a vaulted guardroom, pierced with lancet-holes for musketry. This opened on a broad terrace, sixty feet in length, screened by a substantial parapet-wall, breast-high, with embrasures mounted with cannon. The height of the natural arch spanning the cave is thirty feet above this lower terrace, so that it is particularly light, airy, and cheerful, commanding extensive and magnificent views. Ascending by steps to a yet higher terrace of solid rock, the breadth and height of the cave diminishes, until the end is reached. On the right of the great cave there is a smaller one; besides which there are many small grottoes, the size of chambers, connected by galleries. They are perfectly dry, and were used for store-rooms and magazines. One of them I converted into a chapel for an old priest, covering the rugged walls with gaudy hangings, flaming paintings, and holy relics of saints, saved from the desecrated churches in the neighbourhood.

The interior of this magnificent cavern often reminded me, with its grottoes, galleries, and vaulted roof, of a cathedral, particularly when the softened light of the evening obscured its ruggedness, or by moonlight. The towering mass of rock above the cave projected boldly over its base. To make it perfect, there was a never-failing supply of the purest water, which found its way through subterranean channels from the regions of perpetual snow, filtering through fractures in the rock above into a capacious cistern built on the upper terrace.

This cavern was our citadel, and by removing the upper ladder became impregnable without the aid of a garrison. We built boarded houses within it, and stored it with all the necessities and many of the luxuries of life, besides immense supplies of arms and ammunition.

I urged Odysseus to abide in this stronghold, saying that the borrowed money was sure to be embezzled by a government composed of arrant sharpers; and that but a small part of it would be applied to the purpose it was contracted for. Besides, Ibrahim Pasha was on his way to Greece with an immense force. Civil wars were already rife in the Morea. 'The Greeks', I continued, 'and their country are so admirably adapted for guerilla warfare, that those chiefs who had carried on the insurrection successfully, and had shown that they alone had capacity to continue it, must be recalled from banishment to



defend their country. Then you can retaliate on the government by demanding an account of their stewardship.'

'I did expose their frauds to their faces,' exclaimed the chief, 'in the National Assembly at Nauplia, and on the same night two shots were fired at me from a window opposite to the one I was sitting at. My guards seized the miscreants, and I gave them up to the police, but they were not punished. If I stay here we shall be beleaguered by assassins, and prevented from communicating with my lieutenants and followers. Ghouras still holds the Acropolis of Athens. I cannot stay here; a stag at bay is more to be feared than a lion blockaded in his den.'

It was decided that I should remain, and he go forth. I had shared in his prosperity, and would not leave him in his adversity. As a garrison was superfluous, I reduced mine to half a dozen. To guard against treachery I chose men of different countries, who were not likely to conspire together: a Greek, Turk, Hungarian, and Italian, a venerable priest, and two Greek boys as servants.

Our other inmates were the chief's son, an infant, his wife, mother, and two or three other women. I entrusted the keys of the entrance to the Albanian Turk, a resolute determined fellow.

In the mountains of Pindus and Agrafa, in Thessalia, they have the noblest breed of dogs in the world. In size and strength they are not much inferior to the king of beasts, and in courage and sagacity they are superior. When thoroughbred and well-trained they are held in such estimation by their owners, that money will not buy them. We had one of these. He did the duty of a guard of soldiers, patrolling the lower terrace at night, and keeping watch at the guardroom door by day. He would not enter a room. He was best pleased in the winter snow-storms, when the icicles hung on his long brindled hair and shaggy mane. It was impossible to elude his vigilance or corrupt his fidelity; he would not take food from any other hands than mine or the Albanian's, and could not be bribed. This is more than I could say of any Greek that I had dealings with during the three years I lived amongst them.

In addition to the small number within the cave, I had a much larger force at the foot of the ladders. They were hutted within a stone breastwork. I gave the command of them to the Scotchman whom I had brought from Missolonghi. Their duty was to patrol the passes of the mountain, to collect the tithes or tribute from the neighbouring villages (these were paid in kind),

to learn the news, and to keep up my correspondence with the chief and others.

The name of the Scotchman was Fenton. Thomas was, I think, his Christian name. He introduced himself to me, as I have before narrated, on my visit to Western Greece, saying he had come out expressly to join Lord Byron's regiment; that he had served in the civil wars in Spain, was skilled in guerilla warfare, that his funds were exhausted and, as I was proceeding to the war, he begged me to take him with me.

I pointed out the deplorable condition of foreigners in Greece generally, and the peculiar state of things in that part of the country I was going to in particular, and offered to advance him money to return home. As he persisted in his wish to go with me I reluctantly yielded to his importunity.

He was a tall, bony man, with prominent eyes and features, dark hair, and long face, in the prime of life, thirty-one or thirty-two years of age. His dress, accoutrements, and arms were all well chosen. He was restless, energetic, enterprising, and a famous walker. During the time he was with me I sent him on many missions to the Ionian Islands for money, to the seat of government to see what they were doing, and with letters to friendly chiefs, so that he was not much at the cave; and when he was, he lived in a hut below it. I supplied him with all he wanted—my purse was his. He was not squeamish on these points, but sensual, and denied himself nothing within his reach. When in my neighbourhood he passed most of his time with me. No querulous word or angry glance ever ruffled our friendly intercourse. I thought him honest, and his staying with me a proof of his goodwill, if not personal friendship, and never omitted an occasion of doing him a service.

When Odysseus had been absent three or four months rumours reached me in January 1825 that the government were resolved to deprive the chief of his command in Eastern Greece. To do this effectually they were endeavouring to detach his lieutenant, Ghouras, who held Attica, from him. I dispatched Fenton to Athens and Nauplia, to ascertain the truth of these reports.

## CHAPTER XXIII

Another proudly clad  
In golden arms, spurs a Tartarian barb  
Into the gap, and with his iron mace  
Directs the torrent of that tide of men.

*Hellas—SHELLEY.*

I WAS told some time after this that Odysseus was corresponding with Omer Pasha of Negropont, and fearing that he might resort to some desperate measures in his present difficulties, I left the cave one night in a snowstorm, and with a trusty follower who knew the country, we descended to the plain, threading our way through the rocks and pine trees. We mounted two swift Arab horses, galloped along a hollow valley, crossed a deep stream, the Sperchius, and proceeded towards the town of Livadia, where we arrived the next day. I was surprised to see Turkish Delhi cavalry, known at a great distance by the immense height of their headgear, careering on the plain. On meeting Odysseus he told me he had made a truce for three months with Omer Pasha. The only stipulation between them was that, for that period, Eastern Greece was to be a neutral territory—he said: ‘It is the only way in which I could save the people from being massacred. I have written to the Athenians to say that, as the government have not only refused to give me rations or money for my troops, but are doing their utmost to induce them to desert me, I cannot longer defend the passes which lead to Athens’.

I knew it was a common practice of the military leaders in Greece to make treaties with the enemy in the provinces they governed, for especial objects, on their own responsibility—yet I saw at once the chief had made a fatal error in doing so on the present occasion. I told him that, although his family had ruled in Livadia for three generations, the Turks in the Morea had been dispossessed after four centuries of possession; that now the Greek government were strong, and would direct all their forces to crush him. If he took refuge with the Turks they would betray him, and send him or his head to Constantinople. ‘I know that,’ he answered, ‘I shall take care of that; they are in my power; what I have done is only to bring the Greek govern-

ment to terms.' I saw that he was anxious and perplexed, and that he repented of the step he had taken, and had been plotting to extricate himself before I arrived at Livadia. The next day we went to Thebes, and on the one succeeding followed the line of the Eubœan Strait to Talanta.

The hollowness of this armistice was apparent—Odysseus and the Ottoman bey, suspecting each other of treachery, used every precaution to avoid being ensnared. The Turkish horse stuck to the level ground, the Greeks clung to the hills; Odysseus skirted them, his best men and swiftest runners dogging his steps, and keeping him from being cut off from his guerillas.

The Delhi colonel was selected from the Turkish host at Eubœa, as the only soldier capable of contending in arts or arms with the wily and able Greek chief: he was the best specimen of an Eastern warrior I had seen—calm, vigilant, and dexterous in the disposition of his troopers. Our chief knew the country better than any man in it. I urged him to give the enemy the slip, and to come to the cavern. His answer was: 'Stay, not yet!'

It was early in February we stopped at Talanta on a wet stormy night: in selecting his quarters, our chief with his usual sagacity fixed upon the ruins of a Greek church, situated as the Greek churches, chapels, and monasteries usually are, on an elevated and defensible site—the town was abandoned and in ruins. After we had supped and were smoking our pipes, some of the Greek patrols came in, saying they had captured two Franks. They were ordered to bring them in. I told the chief to make no allusion to me, but to question them through his secretary.

As they entered one of them observed to his comrade in English: 'What a set of cut-throats! Are they Greeks or Turks?'

'Mind what you say.'

'Oh! they only want our money,' answered the other. 'I hope they will give us something to eat before they cut our throats. I am famished.'

Certainly appearances were against us. At one end of the building Odysseus, the Greek chief, the Turkish bey, and I sat smoking our pipes. At the other end, within the church, stood our horses saddled, ready for mounting, the soldiers lying down in clusters along the sides, with all their gear on, for neither Greeks nor Turks divest themselves of a single article of dress or arms during the night. Their hands still grasped their weapons,

and they slept so lightly that if in talking a voice was raised their eager wolfish eyes were instantly upon the speaker. On the strangers entering, some of the soldiers sprang up, others leant on their elbows to listen or rather to look on, for they could not understand a word. The travellers told their story—stating that they were last from Smyrna, and had landed that morning from an English brig, at a small port in the Gulf of Eubœa, with no other object than to see the country. Neither of the chiefs believed them, nor did I; nevertheless, they were treated hospitably, had supper, coffee, and pipes, and their baggage placed beside them. They sat together in a spare corner close to us, with no arms but fowling-pieces. One of them was very ill at his ease, the other, who I learnt from their discourse was a major, took things as coolly as if he had been at an inn, said the cold lamb (it was goat) was the best he had ever tasted, and asked the Greek attendant, if he had no rackie (spirit), the only Romaic word he had learnt. Odysseus, understanding what he wanted, told the boy to give him wine.

‘If they are robbers,’ exclaimed the major, ‘they are damned good fellows, so I drink success to their next foray.’ Soon after, one of them lay down in a dark corner. Turks, Greeks, and all Orientals, consider it the greatest possible insult as well as an outrage on decency, for any one in public to change his garments or expose any part of his person below the waist. The major was a remarkably tall, gaunt, bony man: after finishing his wine he set to work to make up a comfortable bed with horse-cloths, slips of carpet, a bag for a pillow, etc.; when he had done this to his satisfaction, we supposed he would lie down, as his companion had done. On the contrary, he deliberately, as if in his own barrack-room, utterly regardless of our presence, took off his boots, socks, coat, waistcoat, trousers, and shirt, folding each article carefully up and placing it by his bedside. Thus exhibiting himself in all possible attitudes stark naked, he leisurely filled the bowl of his Turkish pipe, and advanced towards us to light it at the fire.

The two chiefs at first looked on the major’s novel proceedings with curiosity, as visitors in the Zoological Gardens do at the hippopotamus; but as the process of stripping advanced, they looked serious; the shirt scene took away their breath; their pipes went out when the major advanced towards them. The Turk started up in horror with his hand on his sword. The major, supposing he was making way for him from civility, and unconscious of giving any offence, made a very polite bow to us

generally; and, in a gentle and conciliating tone said, in his own language: 'Pray, gentlemen, keep your seats, don't let me disturb you'; bent his body into a sharp angle, so as to draw a light from the burning embers. The position he stood in was so ludicrous, that Odysseus and I could not resist laughing. The major considering this a token of good fellowship insisted on shaking hands with us, saying: 'I am sure you are both good fellows—good night!'

I now saw by the light of the fire that he was not absolutely naked, for he had a leather waistcoat and drawers on, but they fitted as tight as his skin, and were exactly of the same colour. The major lay down and smoked himself to sleep. Odysseus went out and brought back the Turkish bey.

Expecting to be surprised by Turks or Greeks, and distrusting those with us, we could not sleep; so our chief, to conceal his own anxiety, and to wile away the time, recounted to the Turk the marvellous things he had seen done at Yanina by the Franks whilst he was serving with Ali Pasha. Odysseus then questioned the Osmanli about Paradise and Mahomet very profanely. The Albanian Turks are by no means bigots: our bey had evidently very little faith in anything but his sword. At length we dozed as we sat.

Before daylight the major got up and went out; I followed him, accosting him in his native tongue.

'How well you speak English, my good fellow,' he said.

The frank and cordial manner of the major so impressed me with his honesty, that I hurriedly explained who I was, the critical state of things with us, and my anxiety to extricate Odysseus from the peril that encompassed him.

The major instantly and earnestly entered into my views, saying: 'The vessel we came in will remain two or three days in the port; it will take but a few hours to reach her. I will return and stop by her for Odysseus, detain her as long as I can, and go with him to the Ionian Islands.'

I told the chief our plan, he eagerly accepted the offer—I pledging myself to keep possession of his mountain home, and to protect his family until altered circumstances permitted him to return to Greece. Hastily making the needful arrangements, the good-hearted major departed on his mission. The chief having much to say to me, and thinking it probable I might be in danger on my return to the cave, convoyed me with his whole force. On our parting, he called some of his principal followers, and said: 'I call you to witness, I give this Englishman

the cavern and everything of mine in it'. Then turning to me, he said: 'Do what you think best without referring to me'. As we sat on the turf by a broken fountain he placed his rough hairy hand on my bosom, saying: 'You have a strong heart in a strong body: you find fault with me for distrusting my countrymen—I never doubted you. I trusted you from the first day as I do now on the last we may ever be together; though I cannot understand why you give money and risk life, to serve those who would shoot you for money, as they will me if they can'.

Either from the vigilance of the Ottomans at Eubœa, or of those with him, or from some other impediment, the chief did not reach the port he was to have embarked from until after the vessel had sailed with the major, although he had detained her as long as possible. I then expected the chief would make for the cave; we kept a sharp look-out, and posted men at the several passes; he wrote to me from time to time, but nothing definitively; and we passed months in this state of suspense. Fenton came from the Morea. I was in the daily habit of sallying forth to gather news, though warned against it. Early in April, when I was some distance from my den, I was startled by a shot; the red-capped Greeks were dogging me behind the rocks and pine trees: I hastened up the steep ascent, gained the lower ladder, mounted slowly until I recovered my wind, then faster, the musket-balls whistling by me right and left—above and below. I should have come down faster than I went up but from the great advantage my men above had, and the sharp cross-fire they kept up to cover my retreat. On my entering the trap-door my assailants retreated across the mountain.

Shortly after this occurrence a large body of Greeks came to Velitza, a village at the foot of our mountain, a detachment ascended towards us; on coming near, one of them advanced, holding a green bough as a flag of truce: he said, Odysseus was with the troops below, and that he had brought a letter from him to me. It was to the effect, that he—Odysseus—was now with his friend Ghouras; he entreated me to come to him, to confer on matters of great importance; saying that hostages would be given for my safe return, etc.

I merely answered: 'If what you say is true, why don't you come here? you may bring Ghouras or half a dozen others with you.'

Several notes of this sort were exchanged. In the last our chief urged me to capitulate as the only means of saving his life; telling me that I might now do so on my own terms, for those

with him were Romeliotas favourably disposed to him and to me; and that if I lost this opportunity I should be blockaded by his enemies, the Moreotes, who would give us no quarter. Of course I declined, for I knew the chief was writing under compulsion: the messenger tried what he could do by tampering with my men, individually proffering large bribes; so I told one of the men to shoot him if he spoke another word. During this parley the most nimble-footed of the enemy scaled the cliffs to see if it was possible to get at us by the aid of ropes from above, or by blasting the rocks, or with shot or shell. I sent several of my people to mingle with the foe, offering five thousand dollars to those who would aid the escape of Odysseus. On the fourth or fifth day they departed—leaving spies to watch us, as I knew they would. I then sent all the men I could trust to follow on the trail of our chief, and wrote to all his friends. That I might not be made a target of a second time, I did not venture forth alone.



## CHAPTER XXIV

Spare me! oh spare!—I will confess,

They  
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I  
And my companion forthwith murdered him.

*The Cenci*—SHELLEY.

IN the latter end of May 1825 a young Englishman named Whitcombe came to me from Racora, in Bœotia, where he had been serving with the Greek troops. At all times glad to see my countrymen, I was particularly so at that time: Fenton was especially pleased with him. They both dined and passed their evenings with me, but slept below in Fenton's hut. On the fourth day, after our noonday meal, we sat smoking and drinking on the veranda of my house on the lower terrace longer than usual.

It was intensely hot; all my people had retreated into one of the upper grottoes, where it was always cool, to enjoy their usual siesta. Fenton said he had made a bet with Whitcombe about their shooting, and that I was to decide it. My Italian servant, Everett, then put up a board for a target at the extremity of the terrace. After they had fired several shots, at Fenton's suggestion I sent the Italian to his comrades above. Fenton then said to me, after some more shots had been fired wide of the mark: 'You can beat him with your pistol, he has no chance with us veterans'.

I took a pistol from my belt and fired; they were standing close together on a flat rock, two yards behind me; the instant I had fired I heard another report, and felt that I was shot in the back. As one of their flint guns had just before hung fire, and I had seen Fenton doing something to the lock of his, I thought it was an accident. I said: 'Fenton, this must have been accidental!' He assured me it was so, and expressed the deepest sorrow. No thought of their treachery crossed my mind. Fenton said: 'Shall I shoot Whitcombe?' I answered, 'No'. I took my other pistol from my belt, when Fenton said: 'I will call your servant', and hastily left me, following Whitcombe to the entrance porch. The dog, growling fiercely, first stopped their flight; he had the voice of a lion, and never gave a

false alarm. The Hungarian, 'always prompt, was quickly at his post on the upper terrace, and hearing I was shot, instantly killed Fenton. Whitcombe attempted to escape by the trap-door leading to the ladder; the dog threw him on his back, and held him as if he had been a rat. Achmett, the Turk, seized him, bound his arms, dragged him to a crane used for hoisting things from below, put a slip-knot in the rope, and placed it round his ankles to hang him. His convulsive shrieks and the frantic struggles he made as his executioners were hoisting him over the precipice, calling on God to witness that he was innocent, thrilled through my shattered nerves; he beseeched me to let him live till the morning, or for one hour, that he might write home, or even for five minutes until he had told me everything. I could not conceive it possible that an English gentleman, my guest, on the most cordial terms with me, should after four days' acquaintance, conspire with Fenton to assassinate me—there had been no provocation, and I could see no motive for the act. Fenton had never seen Whitcombe before, nor had I. If there was foul play Fenton must have been the traitor: so thinking, I ordered the execution to be postponed until the mystery was solved. I had very great difficulty in staying the execution, every one in the cave clamouring for vengeance. His life now hung on mine, and everybody thought that I was mortally wounded. They all swore if I died they would roast him by a slow fire: this was no idle threat, for it had been done on more than one occasion during the sanguinary war. When I was shot I sat down on the rock I had been standing on; bending down my head to let the blood flow from my mouth, a musket-ball and several broken teeth came with it—the socket of the teeth was broken, and my right arm paralyzed. I walked without assistance into the small grotto I had boarded up and floored and called my house; it was divided into two small rooms, and there was a broad veranda in front. Squatting in a corner my servant cut open my dress behind, and told me I had been shot with two balls between my shoulders, near together, on the right side of my spine, and one of them close to it. One of the balls, as I have said, its force expended on my bones, dropped from my mouth without wounding my face; the other broke my collar-bone, and remained in my breast—it is still there. No blood issued from the places they had entered at. We had no surgeon or medicines in the cave; the air was so dry and pure, our living so simple, that this was the first visit sickness or sorrow paid us. Nature makes no mistakes, doctors do;

probably I owe my life to a sound constitution, and having had no doctor.

The morning after I had respited Whitcombe, my servant brought me the following letter from him, which he read to me, though he could not speak English:

For God's sake, sir, permit me to see you, if it is but for five minutes conversation; it will save my life. In the fulness of contrition I yesterday told Favourite (Everett) my crime, and through misconstruction, or some other cause, he has interpreted it to Camerone, so as to cause my death. They all declare to me they will kill me and burn me. Camerone knocked me down and has thrown me in irons. For the mercy of Almighty God, let me see you; instead of augmenting, my explanation will palliate my offence. I wish not that it should be alone. I wish also that Camerone and Everett should be by, to question me before you, and to endeavour to implicate me if they can. I wish only to tell you all the circumstances which I told Everett. Camerone declares that I have plotted all the evil for Ulysses (Odysseus). For God's sake let me explain myself immediately, and do not let me be murdered without a word of explanation. O God! my misery is already too great; they care not for what you tell them; they want to tie me up by my irons to the beam of the room, and cut my head off.

I refused to see him: he then wrote an incoherent account of what took place between him and Fenton—the latter accusing me of having usurped his place, as Odysseus wished him to have the command during his absence; saying that Odysseus had sent a messenger to him at Athens to that effect, and that on his return he should take possession of the cave; that there were beautiful women in it, and stores of gold; he would man it with English, clothe his followers with rich dresses and jewels: there would be a row first, a scene of blood, but that all he wanted was a friend to stand by him. By Whitcombe's account—too rambling and absurd to transcribe—his feeble brain was worked up to a state of homicidal insanity; he used the gentle term of infatuation. He persisted in his asseveration that Fenton shot me, and his only crime was not warning me of my danger. The only thing his writing proved, was that he had a very feeble intellect, and that Fenton had taken advantage of his weakness. He was now mad with terror, he screamed and shrieked if any one came near him, he was in irons and chained to the wall, with no other food than bread and water. I resolved on the twentieth day of his imprisonment to set him free, which I did. When restored to life and liberty he wrote me the following letter:

MUCH-INJURED SIR,

I cannot express to you what I feel for your unmerited kindness to me for your releasing me from an untimely death; other release it is not in the power of man to procure for me, my internal misery and shame being complete. May you never feel the half that I do. May you never be like me, reduced by an acquaintance of four days with a villain from the smiling circles who loved me, and had pleasure in my society, to the solitary wretched outcast which I am now become. I have now no home, no family, no friends—and all I regret is that I have still the gnawings of a conscience which makes me prefer life a little longer, with all my former enjoyments cut off, to an ignominious and untimely end. I can say no more, perhaps now I have troubled you too much.

That God may send you a speedy recovery, and turn every curse which falls upon my head into a blessing upon yours, is the prayer of the wretched

W. G. WHITCOMBE.

He subsequently addressed one of his friends as follows:

CAMP, *August 11, 1825.*

MY DEAR SIR,

You will, perhaps, be astonished at my addressing you, when from the unhappy circumstances into which my fatality has immersed me, I ought only to calculate on your discarding all converse with a being whose sin has placed between him and society a gulf fitter to be removed by any hands but his. But I cannot, cannot bear so sudden a transition into exquisite misery and shame without a line which may give palliatives to my offence. Scan it with a dispassionate eye; my only motive for begging this last favour of you is, that you may rather hold me the weak unsuspecting tool, than the practised unprincipled villain. Others played that part; others saw my easy nature, and thought me a fit instrument for the furthering of their grand speculations and enterprises. They discerned rightly—they have entailed the curse upon me; they have made the villain of me that they wished; but yet shall that curse be retaliated upon them. One is dead: the other still lives, and has left behind him many little interesting traits of character which will tend well to the blazonment of his fame, and conscience, if not warped by constant meannesses, shall by its sweet recollections requite him for the rest.

Charmed by Mr. Humphreys' account of the excessive intrepidity, honour, romantic situation, etc., of his friend Fenton, added to his good-nature and *bonhomie*, I was induced by the repeated, by the urgent entreaties of that Mr. Humphreys, added to a letter (expressing the most pressing invitation from Fenton, addressed to Humphreys, with many dark mystic expressions, known only, I presume, to himself)—I was induced, I say, to pay that visit to the cave. On my arrival I was beset by Fenton's utmost talents of duplicity (in which never mortal man has excelled him). Touched by his mournful tales of wrongs, rejection, deprivation of right, viewing him only as the romantic, the injured, the generous hero

he had been represented by Humphreys, I swore to stand by him on his resolution to recover his rights or die. He worshipped me for it, and being too good a discerner of character to disclose further the nature of his designs, at the idea of which he knew I would revolt, he nailed me to the spot and moment of action, and by not giving a minute's time to recover from my infatuation, he precipitated me into that hell of guilt and shame which had long yawned for the wretched adventurer as his meed, but which, without arraiguing Providence, might still, methinks, have been withheld from me. But where misfortune ever exists, there am I sure to get acquainted with it. And because such a villain survived in the same land, I, without holding with him a shadow of previous connection, without one thought in the whole association of our ideas, which brought with it the slightest similitude, whereby to enable me to account by a harsh destiny, for my being coupled with the memory of such a villain's fate, am nevertheless doomed, solely because such an one exists, to connect myself, and all my happiness and honour, irretrievably with his fate. I am now a wandering outcast, a being whose very claim on society is departed, and would not now wish to renew those claims, from the recollections of dependence which would necessarily hang on that renewal.

But it is not for myself that I am wretched. No—I can roam to far distant regions, and amidst other scenes and other inhabitants commence a new career, unembittered by the past. It is for my family, a family who had boasted that, through all their branches and connections, it had never had a spot to sully it. That that family should, through my faults, be disgraced, is more than I can bear. My mother is a parent who loves me to distraction. I received a letter a few days ago from that quarter. She has been dangerously ill, and the only reflection that contributes to her recovery is that of seeing me return crowned with laurels. They will be laurels!

Now view the reverse. It has been reported that I was dead. That report, with aggravated causes, will reach the ears of my family; my mother, I know, will not survive it. And all this for me.

I only regret that being too great a coward to put an end to my existence, I cannot cut off the miseries of anticipation.

But I have troubled you too long with subjects about which you can feel but little interest. Only one word more. Should an opportunity present itself, for God's sake let not accounts reach England that I am killed.

With hopes that you will excuse my long and selfish letter, and with many kindest remembrances to Mrs. Alison and all your family,

I remain,

Your sincere though unfortunate friend,

(Signed) W. G. WHITCOMBE.

P.S. I sincerely regret that, by the most untoward circumstances, both the letters which you have been good enough at different times to send me, have been lost before they reached my hands; the one by the lies of that rascal Charlipulo—the other by Dr. Tindal, amongst his other things.

## CHAPTER XXV

'Tis thus  
Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts  
Upon the abettors of their own resolves  
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.

SHELLEY.

FOUL plots have been devised, and fit instruments found to execute them in less than four days. I was much more astonished and humiliated at the retrospection of my idiotic infatuation when, by Fenton's papers and other evidence, I discovered that I had been his dupe from the first—a blind man led by a fiendish cur—no more. He was foisted on me at Missolonghi, to act as a spy on Odysseus, and had done so for a whole year.

My credulity was such that I not only told him all I knew, but employed him in many important transactions. Not a shadow or doubt of his honesty ever crossed my mind from the first day of our meeting until his death. I was a fool, and deserved my fate. Fenton, a mercenary bungling ruffian, in the hands of a professor of the black art.

To cut short this disagreeable subject I extract from Gordon's always fearless and generally accurate *History of the Greek Revolution*, his brief notice of the affair:

On taking the field, Odysseus deposited his family in his den on Mount Parnassus, which he confided to the guard of Trelawny (who had lately married his youngest sister), with a handful of men, for that singular cavern is impregnable, and when the ladders that gave access to it were removed, neither armies nor artillery could make any impression. It is a perpendicular height of one hundred and fifty feet from the bottom of a precipice, and sheltered above by a lofty arch. In front were natural and artificial bulwarks, concealing the interior and a portal cut in the rock, to which the flights of ladders gave access; within were houses, magazines stored for the consumption of years, and a fine spring of water.

An attempt was made to murder Trelawny by two of his own countrymen, one of whom, Fenton, a determined villain, having accepted a bribe from the government, seduced the other, a crack-brained young man, into complicity by extravagant tales, and the perpetual excitement of potent liquors. Although pierced through the back with two carbine balls, fracturing his arm and his jaw, the wonderful vigour of his constitution enabled Trelawny to recover.

In the midst of his agony he had the magnanimity to dismiss, unhurt, the unhappy youth who fired at him; as for Fenton, the prime assassin, he was instantly shot by a Hungarian soldier.

In the same month, on the 17th of June, the rising sun disclosed the lifeless body of Odysseus stretched at the foot of the tower that had been his prison; it was said, that a rope by which he was lowering himself had broken, and that he was killed by the fall; however, no one gave credit to this story; it was supposed that he had been strangled, and then thrown from the top. Ghouras subsequently felt remorse for the death of his former patron; heard with pain the mention of his name, and occasionally murmured: 'In that business I was misled'. There can be no doubt that Mavrocordato was at the bottom of these tragical events, instigated fully as much by private revenge as care of the public weal. Odysseus was undoubtedly a tyrant and a traitor; Trelawny in open rebellion, and suspected of tampering with the Turks, who were very anxious to get possession of the cave; but all this might have been forgiven, had they not previously been the personal foes of the Director-General of Western Greece.

For the first twenty days after being wounded I remained in the same place and posture, sitting and leaning against the rock, determined to leave everything to nature. I did not change or remove any portion of my dress, nor use any extra covering. I would not be bandaged, plastered, poulticed, or even washed; nor would I move or allow any one to look at my wound. I was kept alive by yolks of eggs and water for twenty days. It was forty days before there was any sensible diminution of pain; I then submitted to have my body sponged with spirit and water, and my dress partly changed. I was reduced in weight from thirteen stone to less than ten, and looked like a galvanized mummy. I was first tempted to try and eat by seeing my Italian eating raw ham of a wild hog which I had shot and cured; by great effort I opened my mouth sufficiently to introduce a piece of the size of a shilling, notwithstanding the agony of moving my fractured jaw, and by degrees managed to devour it, and from that time gathered strength, I suppose from the affinity of our Saxon nature to hog; excepting coffee, I refused all wishy-washy or spoon-food, and stuck to wild boar, which in turn stuck to me; it spliced my bones and healed my flesh, excepting my right arm, which was shrivelled up and paralyzed.

In three months after I had been wounded my hurts were healing, and my health returning, but my right arm was painful, withered, and paralyzed, my only hope of regaining the use of it was to get the ball extracted; and for that purpose a surgeon was indispensable.

Ghouras had been nominated to the command of Eastern

Greece, as the stipulated payment for his treachery to his former chief, but the Turks held all the plains. So we were environed with foes, and closely watched, but my trusty and zealous friends, the Klephtes, were always on the alert; nestling with the eagles amongst the most inaccessible crags by day, and coming down with the wolves at night, they supplied us with fresh provisions, and kept us informed of everything that took place around. They even brought me a Klephtes surgeon, stipulating to kill him if he did not cure me; he made an incision with a razor under my breastbone, and poked about with his finger to find the ball but in vain; the Klephtes then proposed to escort me to any place I chose to go to for a Frank doctor, or to kidnap one at Athens, and bring him to me, and to leave their families as hostages. I had perfect faith in their probity, but lingered on hoping for a change. Soon after this, Zepare, one of their leaders, brought me news at night that his men were on the trail of a Frank, and they would bring him to me: he said a medico, for they believe all the Franks are more or less so, from their habit of carrying and giving medicines. The next morning a party of soldiers arrived, escorting the major who so astonished Odysseus and the Turkish bey at Talanta by his eccentricity. I was even more surprised now than then at meeting him. It appeared he had never lost sight of me. When he heard I was in peril he made several unsuccessful attempts to come to me; he then took a cruise in search of the commodore on the station, Hamilton, and stated my case. Hamilton, always prompt in acts of humanity, insisted on the government's not only permitting the major to have free access to me, but that I should have liberty to embark in one of his ships, if I chose to do so. After some days of deliberation and consultation with Odysseus's widow, and the inmates of the cave, I reluctantly agreed to take advantage of this favourable occasion; my trusty crew promised to remain at their posts until my return, or until the enemies of their former chief, then in power, were ousted, and then to be guided by circumstances. No sooner had I left than Ghouras closely invested the place. The eagerness of both the Greeks and Turks to possess the cave, arose from the stories current in that land of lies, of the fabulous treasures it contained. The cupidity of the Greeks was lashed up to frenzy; every stratagem their subtle wits could devise was tried; crouching behind every rock and tree they kept up a continual fusillade; they might as well have fired at the man in the moon, as at the men in the mountain—if they came too near, the Hungarian stopped them



with a shower of grape from the cannon. Some months after, when men and things were changed, the inmates of the cavern came to terms with some of the old friends of the late chief, who had always used their influence to protect the cave, as well they might, since much of the plunder they had accumulated during the war was deposited within it. If the Hungarian Camerone had served in any other country than Greece in a time of war he would have ranked high, for he was a well-trained warrior, skilful, resolute, and modest; he had been nearly two years in Greece when I fell in with him at Missolonghi, serving without pay or promotion: noted he certainly was, for his valour had been conspicuous in many battles.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Victory! Victory! Austria, Russia, England,  
And that tame serpent, that poor shadow, France,  
Cry peace, and that means death, when monarchs speak.

SHELLEY.

WHEN the Muses deserted Parnassus, the Klephtes, i.e. outlaws, took possession of their haunts, and kept alive the love of freedom and the use of arms. They were the only Greeks I found with any sense of honour; they kept their words and fulfilled their engagements; I protected and fed their families, and they escorted me in all my expeditions; I was continually in their power, yet they never attempted to betray me. The Klephtes were the only efficient soldiers at the commencement of the insurrection; and their leaders maintained the war for three years, so successfully that the Greek government were enabled to borrow money. The government then resolved to divide the forces of the Klephtes, to appoint their own partisans as leaders, and to conduct the war themselves; they raised forces and imprisoned the former military leaders, wasted time in disputing about their plans of campaigns, and the nomination of the commissioners to see that they were carried out. In two scientific campaigns carried on by civilians the Greeks lost all the territory the former arbitrary chiefs had won; and of the foreign loan, £2,800,000, there remained only five shillings in bad money at the close of those campaigns. If there had been any place of refuge the insurrection would have ended by the flight of the leaders and submission of the people. The members of the government sent away the money they had embezzled, and the primates and other rich rascals attempted to escape with their families, but they were stopped by the populace.

Greece was reconquered; the vanquished Christians sat in sullen groups round the walls of their only remaining fortress in the Morea; death, or to resume the Moslem's chains, their only alternative. At this critical period a messenger arrived from Navarino, proclaiming, in the words of our great poet:

News, friends; our wars are done, the Turks are drowned.

The people now sprang up frantic with joy.

For six years all the Christian states had been standing looking on at the bloodiest insurrection on record, sympathizing with the unbelieving Ottomans. At the twelfth hour the three great maritime Leviathans turned round, and, falling unexpectedly upon their ancient allies, annihilated them.

The policy of the crafty Muscovite is intelligible. He wanted to possess Greece and cripple his natural enemy, the Turk. He did both at little cost; the Ottoman fleet was destroyed, and Greece converted from a Turkish into a Russian Hospodariat. The policy of France and England is inexplicable; it is one of those inscrutable diplomatic mysteries devised by heaven-born ministers, which men of women born cannot comprehend.

From the beginning to the end of the insurrection in Greece Commodore Rowan Hamilton and Colonel C. J. Napier were the only English officers in command who acted justly and generously to the Greeks. Sir Thomas Maitland, and his successor, Sir Frederick Adams, High Commissioners of the Ionian Islands, from their natural sympathy with tyranny, favoured the Turks on all occasions. Napier was high-minded and independent in his opinions, which is always a disqualification in the eyes of officials. His general popularity and superior influence with the Ionians mortified Sir Frederick Adams excessively; he did all he could in his official capacity to thwart Napier; he gave vent to his rancour in the most trivial matters; he even sent an official letter to Napier on the impropriety of his wearing moustachios. The colonel was very much amused at this dispatch; he instantly obeyed the mandate by cutting them off, and enclosing them in his reply to the Lord High Commissioner, who, no doubt, forwarded this important correspondence, with the enclosure, to the commander-in-chief. If these emblems of war are preserved amongst the trophies at the Horse Guards the hair may be used as the lion's beard is by the Indians—they burn it, and swallow the ashes, believing it will give them the strength and courage of the lion.

It was particularly revolting to the mind, as well as feelings of Napier, to witness the war as waged in Greece—without a plan, combination, system, or leader; every man frantic with excitement to kill and plunder on his own account. Napier, as I have before said, would have undertaken the war when he was solicited by the Greeks to do so if they had complied with the terms he considered indispensable to their success, which were that he should have uncontrolled power over the army. Whilst the Greek government were treating with Napier a

distinguished French officer, Colonel Fabvier, volunteered his services without any stipulations, and was accepted. Napier having no other object than the success of a just cause, pointed out to me on the map the strategy and tactics he should have used at that juncture, had he commanded the Greek forces in the Morea. I asked him to write his plan, as the art of war is so little studied by our military men. I transcribe a campaign on scientific principles, as improvized on the exigency of the moment, by the great master of the art; the general principles laid down by so skilful a commander are applicable to any other locality in all times, especially in defensive warfare, and it requires no prophet to foretell there will be many such wars ere the lamb lies down with the lion.

Napier's letters not only exemplify the skill of the soldier, but show the frank, generous, manly character of the man. Byron, in a letter to the Greek committee from Cephalonia, in 1823, speaking of Colonel Napier, says:

Of his military character, it is superfluous to speak, of his personal, I can say, from my own knowledge as well as from all rumour or private report, that it is as excellent as his military; in short, a better or a braver man is not easily to be found; he is our man to lead a regular force, or to organize a national one for the Greeks—ask the army—ask any one.

The following letters are addressed to me by this great general:

26th May, 1826.

Circumstances must decide in war, speaking generally, but frequently they may be commanded by able arrangements; instead of waiting to see what an enemy will do, he may be often forced to do that which we want him to do. I think this may be now accomplished by the Greek troops, should Ibrahim Pacha besiege Napoli di Romania. In this event, I conclude he will have about 15,000 men, and that he will draw his supplies from Navarin or Modon, a distance of about eighty miles; and have an intermediate depot at Tripolitza, which is about twenty-five from Napoli. These roads pass through the mountains, and great difficulties will arise in marching his convoys, both from the nature of the country itself, and the exposure to constant attacks.

I also conclude that the Greek forces will amount to about 6,000 regulars, and 10,000 irregulars, exclusive of the garrison of Napoli, in which I would leave only irregulars, the best to be had; taking the worst, with the whole regular force, to Monemvasia, into which place I would throw in as much provision as possible; and leaving this fortress with the smallest possible garrison picked from the irregulars, but (as well as Napoli di Romania) with the most *resolute governor and engineers*, I would issue forth and throw the whole regular and remaining irregular force on the communications of the besieging army.

The point at which I would cut them must be *determined* by local circumstances, viz., the force of the enemy; the distribution of that force; the nature of the country; and the exact knowledge of distances, or rather *times of march*. By this, the Greek army would oblige the Egyptian army to *raise the siege*, or to *send a force able to clear the road of the Greek army*, or he must go without provisions; if he raises the siege, such a failure, besides its actual cost, would have an immense moral effect to his prejudice, and enable the Greeks to take more bold measures; in short, it would be, what they have yet not seen, a victory produced by sound principles of war.

If he prefers the second way, viz., to send a force which he thinks capable of clearing the road, and re-opening his communications, what is the consequence? His army must be so weakened that the siege cannot be continued with vigour; and the detached force will either be fought and defeated by the Greeks, or they would retire before this force into Maina, and even to Monemvasia. The moment this was done, this detached force would again march to join Ibrahim before Napoli; and would be followed up by the Greek army, which would again occupy its old position on the communication. This might be repeated twice or three times; but it is impossible that Ibrahim could continue this game long, and the moment he ceased to play it, he would be obliged to raise the siege. It seems difficult to say how this plan could fail, unless the Greek commander allowed the force detached against him to cut him off from Monemvasia, or from wherever he drew his subsistence.

As to the third choice, it is evident that he could not adopt it, as, although his Egyptians may live upon little, yet that little they must have; he would therefore try to receive his supplies from Patras; and although there would, perhaps, be more difficulty still, the Greek general might play the same game on that line of operation, as he would on the line with Navarin. He might occupy the *last* with his regulars, and detach his irregulars on the first. A Turkish force could hardly venture against the Greek irregulars, having their left flank exposed to the regular army of Greeks. I do not know whether I have clearly explained my meaning; but I am sure that if the Greek government will do what they ought, viz., give Colonel Fabvier the full and uncontrolled direction of the war, or do this with Colonel Gordon, both those gentlemen will see what I mean, and that this plan is formed on sound strategetical principles.

It is impossible to believe that any force which Ibrahim could detach would be able to force six thousand regular Greek soldiers through the passes of the Mainiote country back upon Monemvasia. I have only supposed the *worst* in supposing that they would do this, but in point of fact I imagine the Greek regular force could occupy some strong position in which it would force the troops detached against it to give battle under every disadvantage; and should the Greeks be defeated, that they might rally at and defend a multitude of defiles in the strong country between Tripolitza and Monemvasia—all these things are details of the execution, which depend on the talents of the commanders. If this commander is Colonel Fabvier with Colonel Gordon supporting him, there is no doubt in my mind of its success; if the Greek force, on the contrary, is commanded by

the Greek General-in-Chief, Colocotroni, it must inevitably fail, as he is incapable of even comprehending, much less of executing such a campaign.

In regard to the number of forces that I have supposed on each side, it is not very material that I should be exact, because the principle will hold good as long as the disproportion between the opposed armies is not *so great* as to put an end to all opposition, and this is a disproportion so vast that in such a country as Greece I can hardly conceive possible. Supposing that the Turkish forces receive their provision by sea, then they would not perhaps detach a force against the Greek army coming from Monemvasia, which might attack Tripolitza at its leisure: this, I suspect, would quickly produce the desired results! And last, though not least important, one has everything to expect from Lord Cochrane, who will not allow this provision to arrive by sea so easily. Are we to suppose that one of the greatest men of the age, for such he decidedly is, will be unable to effect anything against the enemy? Lord Cochrane's whole life has been a series of proofs that he possesses all the qualities of a great commander.

DEAR TRELAWNY,

When I returned from my ride, I wrote down what I said—if you think it would be of any use, send it to Gordon. Not but that both he and Fabvier could form this plan as well or better than I, but my own opinion may have some weight with the Greeks, in support of those held by these two officers. For my own part, I would try this plan had I but *one* thousand men and *one* cannon! so convinced am I that it is a sound one; and that if executed with skill, activity, and courage it would make Ibrahim lose his game.

Yours,

C. NAPIER.

I dare say this is full of errors, for I wrote as fast as I could scribble; keep it, for I have no copy. I wish you to give me one.

CEPHALONIA, 20th June, 1826.

DEAR TRELAWNY,

Many thanks for your note dated 12th, which I have only this morning received. I hear Hastings has reached Napoli, which I hope will help Gordon to make arrangements. I hear that Ibrahim Pacha has taken and fortified Sparta. If he can occupy Leondari and Sparta with strong detachments, he may render the execution of my plan difficult; but if he divides his forces with such numerous garrisons, the question arises, whether or not he can keep the field? However, he would greatly embarrass all operations by fortifying Leondari and Mistra (Sparta). These posts are, at this moment, the real points of 'strategy' for the defence of Napoli, and his seizure of them denotes a good military head. Were I in Gordon's place, supposing him master of his movements, I would make them keep their *vigils* in Sparta. That garrison should have no sinecure; but my fear is, that at Napoli they are all in such a state of confusion and ignorance, that he will not be able to make any movements at all. However, all I can say is, that the loss of any strong post demands

that the Greeks should act upon the same principle against those posts that would have been acted upon against the original positions of the Turks. The general principle remains the same, but is applied to a different locality. For example (take your map). When Mistra is held by the Turks, the Greeks can no longer throw themselves on the line of communication between Tripolitza and Navarin. They must then change their *object*, and throw themselves on the line between Mistra; and from wherever the garrison draws its provisions, Mistra becomes the object instead of Tripolitza. How this is to be accomplished, God knows. The war is, in this instance, on too small a scale to judge by a map, as I could in a large movement acting against Tripolitza; but military talent, in a country like the Morea, finds ways to do what it wants. The grand secret in *mountain* countries is to *isolate* the enemy, which obliges him to abandon *his strong* position, and attack you in *yours*. It is not to one so well acquainted with the country as you are, that I need say what it would be to attack a good position in Greece, even without fortifications, much more with them.

It is in the art of forcing an enemy to fight you on your own chosen ground, that military genius consists, and few things are more difficult in practice. It unites so much theory and so much practice with great fearlessness of character, no timid man will throw himself into those decisive positions which produce great results.

Yours truly,

C. NAPIER.

CEPHALONIA, 1st August, 1826.

MY DEAR TRELAWNY,

Pray do not let Mr. Ruppenthal say that I made proposals to him, without contradicting him, because I did no such thing. I think I know what he is; but be he what he may, he can make nothing of my letters that can do me any harm, supposing he should be a bad one. When one has *no secrets* it is hard to discover them!

I hope Gordon has made port. I do not understand Fabvier's movements. I dare say they are not voluntary. I give no man credit for doing what he likes—what is wise—in Greece; until I hear that he has 2,000 good European drilled soldiers at his back, and 100,000 in his pockets, and a gallows with his advanced guard. I think were I there with the only power that would tempt me to go, I should raise the price of hemp 50 per cent in ten days. What has become of Lord Cochrane? all hands say *he comes*—but he comes not! With kind regards to Gordon if he is with you, believe me,

Yours hastily,

C. J. NAPIER.

I wish to God something may be done for the Greeks, for our orders are positive not to admit fugitives, and really though I think the rules laid down by the government are just, it is very distressing to execute them—at least to me it is so.

# APPENDIX

## TRANSLATION FROM THE ITALIAN

This Sixteenth day of August, 1822, at 4 o'clock, p.m.

WE Domenico Simoncini captain and official of the maritime quarantine of the city of Viareggio, in consequence of orders communicated by his Excellency the governor of the said city, President of the Quarantine Commission, in paper No. 90; together with which is sent a copy of the dispatch of his Excellency the Minister of State of the 27th of last month, No. 384, whereby the Quarantine Office is informed that our august Sovereign has granted the request made by the British Legation to be allowed to remove the mortal remains of Mr. Shelley, brought to land by the waves of the sea, on the 18th day of July, where they were buried according to the quarantine rules in force.

E. J. Trelawny, commanding the schooner *Bolivar*, with the English flag, presented himself to us, authorized by the Consul of His Britannic Majesty with a paper from the same, dated 13th of this present month, which he produced: attended by this gentleman, by the Mayor commanding the place, and the Royal Marine of the Duchy, and by his Excellency Lord Noel Byron, an English peer, we proceeded to the eastern shore, and arrived at the spot where the above-mentioned corpse had been buried. After recognition made, according to the legal forms of the tribunal, we caused the ground to be opened and found the remains of the above-mentioned corpse. The said remains were placed in an iron furnace, there burnt and reduced to ashes. After which, always in the presence of those above mentioned, the said ashes were placed in a box lined with black velvet, which was fastened with screws; this was left in the possession of the said E. J. Trelawny to be taken to Leghorn.

The present report is made in double original of the whole of the above proceeding, and is signed by us, and the above-named gentlemen.

E. J. TRELAWNY.

DCO. SIMONCINI.

NOEL BYRON.

COMMISSIONE SANITARIA MARITTIMA,  
VIAREGGIO,  
DUCHY OF LUCCA.

The body mentioned in the following letter as found near Massa, was that of Charles Vivian.



# TRELAWNY'S SHELLEY AND BYRON 301

## TRANSLATION

VIA REGGIO, *August 29, 1822.*

RESPECTED SIR,

I return infinite thanks for the excellent telescope which you have had the kindness to send me, and assure you that I shall ever bear in mind the attention I have received from you. I hope that some favourable occasion may occur when I may be called upon to attend to your honoured commands, and request you freely to dispose of me in anything in which I can be of service in these parts. I have delayed some days before answering your esteemed letter of the 22nd of this month, in respect of receiving from Massa the information you desired, which is as follows:

The same day, the 18th July, when the sea cast on shore the body of Signore Shelley, there was thrown up on the shores of Massa another corpse which could not be recognized, from its having been eaten about the head by fish. It had on a cotton waistcoat, and white and blue striped trousers; a cambric shirt—and was without shoes. This body was burnt on the shore, and the ashes interred in the sand. At Montignoso the sea threw up a water-barrel; at Cinguale, an empty demijohn and two bottles; and at Motrone, a small boat painted red and black.

This is the news I have been able to obtain, with reference to the misfortune which has happened, and to my own knowledge. If I should meet with any further information, I shall consider it my duty to communicate it forthwith.

Accept the expression of my distinguished esteem and respect,

Your most humble and obedient servant,

DCO. SIMONCINI.



PEACOCK'S  
MEMOIRS OF SHELLEY  
WITH SHELLEY'S LETTERS TO PEACOCK

PEACOCK, THOMAS LOVE (1785-1866)

Produced four early books of poetry: *The Monks of St. Mark* (1804), *Palmyra* (1806), *The Genius of the Thames* (1810), *The Philosophy of Melancholy* (1812). In 1812 he became acquainted with Shelley through the medium of his publisher, Thomas Hookham. Was a close friend of the Shelleys in the succeeding years, and while visiting them at Bishopsgate met Hogg. When Shelley went abroad in 1816, he sent Peacock a number of beautiful letters from Switzerland. Peacock arranged for the Shelleys to live near him at Great Marlow on their return, but by 1818 Shelley was again on the wing and Peacock and he were never to meet again, in spite of a correspondence lasting almost until Shelley's death. In the meantime Peacock had found his real bent with the publication of *Headlong Hall* (1816), *Melincourt* (1817), and *Nightmare Abbey* (1818), and during his last period of personal association with Shelley he wrote his best long poem, *Rhododaphne* (1818). In 1820 he published in Ollier's 'Literary Pocket Book' *The Four Ages of Poetry*, which provoked Shelley's *Defence*. By the time of Shelley's death he had been appointed co-executor of the poet's estate with Lord Byron, had married, and had been appointed assistant examiner at the India House. In 1822 *Mard Marian* was published, *The Misfortunes of Elphin* in 1829, and *Crotchet Castle* in 1831. Was appointed Chief Examiner at the India House in 1836. In 1837 appeared *Paper Money Lyrics and other Poems*, most of which had been written many years before. Between 1855 and 1860 contributed to *Fraser's Magazine* the papers on Shelley here reprinted, the *Letters* being printed as an Appendix to the articles in 1860. In 1860 appeared his last novel, *Gryll Grange*.

NOTE

The uninitialed footnotes in this section are those of Mr. H. F. Brett-Smith, and are used by the courtesy of the Delegates of the Oxford University Press. With regard to the other footnotes, H. B. F. signifies H. Buxton Forman, M. S., Mary Shelley and T. L. P., Peacock.

# MEMOIRS OF PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

## PART I

Rousseau, ne recevant aucun auteur, remercie Madame — de ses bontés, et la prie de ne plus venir chez lui.

ROUSSEAU had a great aversion to visitors of all classes, but especially to literary visitors, feeling sure that they would print something about him. A lady who had long persisted in calling on him, one day published a brochure, and sent him a copy. He rejoiced in the opportunity which brought her under his rule of exclusion, and terminated their intercourse by the above *billet-doux*.

Rousseau's rule bids fair to become general with all who wish to keep in the *secretum iter et fallentis semita vitæ*, and not to become materials for general gossip. For not only is a departed author of any note considered a fair subject to be dissected at the tea-table of the reading public, but all his friends and connections, however quiet and retiring and unobtrusive may have been the general tenor of their lives, must be served up with him. It is the old village scandal on a larger scale; and as in these days of universal locomotion people know nothing of their neighbours, they prefer tittle-tattle about notorieties to the retailing of whispers about the Jenkinsons and Tomkinsons of the vicinity.

This appetite for gossip about notorieties being once created in the 'reading public', there will be always found persons to minister to it; and among the volunteers of this service, those who are best informed and who most valued the departed will probably not be the foremost. Then come biographies abounding with errors; and then, as matter of defence perhaps, comes on the part of friends a tardy and more authentic narrative. This is at best, as Mr. Hogg describes it, a 'difficult and delicate task'. But it is always a matter of choice and discretion. No man is bound to write the life of another. No man who does so is bound to tell the public all he knows. On the contrary, he is bound to keep to himself whatever may injure the interests or hurt the feelings of the living, especially when the latter have in no way injured or calumniated the dead, and are not necessarily brought before the tribunal of public opinion in the character of either plaintiffs or defendants. Neither if there be in the life

of the subject of the biography any event which he himself would willingly have blotted from the tablet of his own memory, can it possibly be the duty of a survivor to drag it into daylight. If such an event be the cardinal point of a life; if to conceal it or to misrepresent it would be to render the whole narrative incomplete, incoherent, unsatisfactory alike to the honour of the dead and the feelings of the living; then, as there is no moral compulsion to speak of the matter at all, it is better to let the whole story slumber in silence.

Having lived some years in very familiar intimacy with the subject of these memoirs; having had as good opportunities as any, and better than most persons now living, to observe and appreciate his great genius, extensive acquirements, cordial friendships, disinterested devotion to the well-being of the few with whom he lived in domestic intercourse, and ardent endeavours by private charity and public advocacy to ameliorate the condition of the many who pass their days in unremunerating toil; having been named his executor conjointly with Lord Byron, whose death, occurring before that of Shelley's father, when the son's will came into effect, left me alone in that capacity; having lived after his death in the same cordial intimacy with his widow, her family, and one or two at least of his surviving friends, I have been considered to have some peculiar advantages for writing his life, and have often been requested to do so; but for the reasons above given I have always refused.

Wordsworth says to the Cuckoo:

O blithe new-comer! I have heard,  
I hear thee, and rejoice.  
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,  
Or but a wandering Voice?

. . . . .

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!  
Even yet thou art to me  
No bird, but an invisible thing,  
A voice, a mystery.

Shelley was fond of repeating these verses, and perhaps they were not forgotten in his poem *To a Skylark*:

Hail to thee, blithe spirit!  
Bird thou never wert,  
That from heaven, or near it,  
Pourest thy full heart,  
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

. . . . .

The pale purple even  
Melts around thy flight:  
Like a star of heaven,  
In the broad daylight,  
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight.

Now, I could have wished that, like Wordsworth's Cuckoo, he had been allowed to remain a voice and a mystery: that, like his own Skylark, he had been left unseen in his congenial region,

Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot  
Which men call earth,<sup>1</sup>

and that he had been only heard in the splendour of his song. But since it is not to be so, since so much has been, and so much more will probably be, written about him, the motives which deterred me from originating a substantive work on the subject, do not restrict me from commenting on what has been published by others, and from correcting errors, if such should appear to me to occur, in the narratives which I may pass under review.

I have placed the works at the head of this article in the order in which they were published.<sup>2</sup> I have no acquaintance with Mr. Middleton. Mr. Trelawny and Mr. Hogg I may call my friends.

Mr. Middleton's work is chiefly a compilation from previous publications, with some very little original matter, curiously obtained.

Mr. Trelawny's work relates only to the later days of Mr. Shelley's life in Italy.

Mr. Hogg's work is the result of his own personal knowledge, and of some inedited letters and other documents, either addressed to himself or placed at his disposal by Sir Percy Shelley and his lady. It is to consist of four volumes, of which the two just published bring down the narrative to the period immediately preceding Shelley's separation from his first wife. At that point I shall terminate this first part of my proposed review.

I shall not anticipate opinions, but shall go over all that is important in the story as briefly as I can, interspersing such observations as may suggest themselves in its progress.

<sup>1</sup> Milton, *Comus*, ll. 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Shelley and his Writings*. By Charles S. Middleton. London: Newby, 1856. [An error, repeated in Cole's edition, for 1858.]

*Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron*. By E. J. Trelawny. London: Moxon, 1858.

*The Life of Percy Bysshe Shelley*. By Thomas Jefferson Hogg. In Four Volumes. Vols. I and II. London: Moxon, 1858.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was born at his father's seat, Field Place, in Sussex, on the 4th of August 1792. His grandfather, Sir Bysshe Shelley, was then living, and his father, Timothy Shelley, Esquire, was then or subsequently a Member of Parliament. The family was of great antiquity; but Percy conferred more honour on it than he derived from it.

He had four sisters and a brother, the youngest of the family, and the days of his childhood appear to have passed affectionately in his domestic society.

To the first ten years of his life we have no direct testimony but that of his sister Hellen, in a series of letters to Lady Shelley, published in the beginning of Mr. Hogg's work. In the first of these she says:

A child who at six years old was sent daily to learn Latin at a clergyman's house, and as soon as it was expedient removed to Dr. Greenland's, from thence to Eton, and subsequently to college, could scarcely have been the *uneducated* son that some writers would endeavour to persuade those who read their books to believe he ought to have been, if his parents despised education.<sup>1</sup>

Miss Hellen gives an illustration of Shelley's boyish traits of imagination:

On one occasion he gave the most minute details of a visit he had paid to some ladies with whom he was acquainted at our village. He described their reception of him, their occupations, and the wandering in their pretty garden, where there was a well-remembered filbert-walk and an undulating turf-bank, the delight of our morning visit. There must have been something peculiar in this little event; for I have often heard it mentioned as a singular fact, and it was ascertained almost immediately, that the boy had never been to the house. It was not considered as a falsehood to be punished; but I imagine his conduct altogether must have been so little understood and unlike that of the generality of children, that these tales were left unnoticed.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Hogg says at a later date:

He was altogether incapable of rendering an account of any transaction whatsoever, according to the strict and precise truth, and the bare naked realities of actual life; not through an addiction to falsehood, which he cordially detested, but because he was the creature, the unsuspecting and unresisting victim, of his irresistible imagination.

Had he written to ten different individuals the history of some proceeding in which he was himself a party and an eye-witness, each of his ten reports would have varied from the rest in essential and important circumstances. The relation given on the morrow would

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i, p. 25.



be unlike that of the day, as the latter would contradict the tale of yesterday.<sup>1</sup>

Several instances will be given of the habit, thus early developed in Shelley, of narrating, as real, events which had never occurred; and his friends and relations have thought it necessary to give prominence to this habit as a characteristic of his strong imaginativeness predominating over reality. Coleridge has written much and learnedly on this subject of ideas with the force of sensations, of which he found many examples in himself.

At the age of ten Shelley was sent to Sion House Academy, near Brentford. 'Our master,' says his schoolfellow, Captain Medwin, 'a Scotch Doctor of Law, and a divine, was a choleric man, of a sanguinary complexion, in a green old age, not wanting in good qualities, but very capricious in his temper, which, good or bad, was influenced by the daily occurrences of a domestic life not the most harmonious, and of which his face was the barometer and his hand the index.' This worthy was in the habit of cracking unbecoming jokes, at which most of the boys laughed; but Shelley, who could not endure this sort of pleasantries, received them with signs of aversion. A day or two after one of these exhibitions, when Shelley's manifestation of dislike to the matter had attracted the preceptor's notice, Shelley had a theme set him for two Latin lines on the subject of *Tempestas*.

He came to me [says Medwin] to assist him in the task. I had a cribbing book, of which I made great use, Ovid's *Tristibus*. I knew that the only work of Ovid with which the doctor was acquainted was the *Metamorphoses*, and by what I thought good luck, I happened to stumble on two lines exactly applicable to the purpose. The hexameter I forget, but the pentameter ran thus:

Jam, jam tacturos sidera celsa putes.

So far the story is not very classically told. The title of the book should have been given as *Tristia*, or *De Tristibus*; and the reading is *tacturas*, not *tacturos*; *summa*, not *celsa*: the latter term is inapplicable to the stars. The distich is this:

Me miserum! quanti montes voluntur aquarum!

Jam, jam tacturas sidera summa putes.

Something was probably substituted for *Me miserum*! But be this as it may, Shelley was grievously beaten for what the schoolmaster thought bad Latin.<sup>2</sup> The doctor's judgment was

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Not for the erroneous use of *celsa*, but for the true Ovidian Latin, which the doctor held to be bad. [T. L. P.]

of a piece with that of the Edinburgh Reviewers, when taking a line of Pindar, which Payne Knight had borrowed in a Greek translation of a passage in Gray's *Bard*, to have been Payne Knight's own, they pronounced it to be nonsense.<sup>1</sup>

The name of the Brentford doctor according to Miss Hellen Shelley was Greenland, and according to Mr. Hogg it was Greenlaw. Captain Medwin does not mention the name, but says: 'So much did we mutually hate Sion House that we never alluded to it in after-life'. Mr Hogg says: 'In walking with Shelley to Bishopsgate<sup>2</sup> from London, he pointed out to me more than once a gloomy brick house as being this school. He spoke of the master, Doctor Greenlaw, not without respect, saying: "He was a hard-headed Scotchman, and a man of rather liberal opinions"'.<sup>3</sup> Of this period of his life he never gave me an account, nor have I heard or read any details which appeared to bear the impress of truth. Between these two accounts the doctor and his character seem reduced to a myth. I myself know nothing of the matter. I do not remember Shelley ever mentioning the doctor to me. But we shall find as we proceed that whenever there are two evidences to one transaction, many of the recorded events of Shelley's life will resolve themselves into the same mythical character.

At the best, Sion House Academy must have been a bad beginning of scholastic education for a sensitive and imaginative boy.

After leaving this academy, he was sent, in his fifteenth year, to Eton. The headmaster was Doctor Keate, a less mythical personage than the Brentford Orbilius, but a variety of the same genus. Mr. Hogg says:

Dr. Keate was a short, short-necked, short-legged, man—thick-set, powerful, and very active. His countenance resembled that of a bull-dog; the expression was not less sweet and bewitching: his eyes, his nose, and especially his mouth, were exactly like that comely and engaging animal, and so were his short crooked legs. It was said in the school that old Keate could pin and hold a bull with his teeth. His iron sway was the more unpleasant and shocking after the long mild Saturnian reign of Dr. Goodall, whose temper, character, and conduct corresponded precisely with his name, and

<sup>1</sup> I imagine there are many verses in the best classical poets which, if presented as original, would not pass muster with either teachers or critics. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> More properly Bishopgate, without the s: the entrance to Windsor Park from Englefield Green. Shelley had a furnished house, in 1815-16, very near to this park gate. [T. L. P.]

<sup>3</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 30.





THOMAS LOVE PEACOCK

under whom Keate had been master of the lower school. Discipline, wholesome and necessary in moderation, was carried by him to an excess. It is reported that on one morning he flogged eighty boys. Although he was rigid, coarse, and despotical, some affirm that on the whole he was not unjust, nor altogether devoid of kindness. His behaviour was accounted vulgar and ungentlemanlike, and therefore he was particularly odious to the gentlemen of the school, especially to the refined and aristocratical Shelley<sup>1</sup>

But Shelley suffered even more from his schoolfellows than he did from his master. It had been so at Brentford, and it was still more so at Eton, from the more organized system of fagging, to which no ill-usage would induce him to submit. But among his equals in age he had several attached friends, and one of these, in a letter dated 27 February 1857, gives the following reminiscences of their Eton days:

MY DEAR MADAM,

Your letter has taken me back to the sunny time of boyhood, 'when thought is speech and speech is truth', when I was the friend and companion of Shelley at Eton. What brought us together in that small world was, I suppose, kindred feelings, and the predominance of fancy and imagination. Many a long and happy walk have I had with him in the beautiful neighbourhood of dear old Eton. We used to wander for hours about Clewer, Frogmore, the park at Windsor, the Terrace; and I was a delighted and willing listener to his marvellous stories of fairyland, and apparitions, and spirits, and haunted ground; and his speculations were then (for his mind was far more developed than mine) of the world beyond the grave. Another of his favourite rambles was Stoke Park, and the picturesque churchyard where Gray is said to have written his *Elegy*, of which he was very fond. I was myself far too young to form any estimate of character, but I loved Shelley for his kindness and affectionate ways. He was not made to endure the rough and boisterous pastime at Eton, and his shy and gentle nature was glad to escape far away, to muse over strange fancies, for his mind was reflective and teeming with deep thought. His lessons were child's play to him, and his power of Latin versification marvellous. I think I remember some long work he had even then commenced, but I never saw it. His love of nature was intense, and the sparkling poetry of his mind shone out of his speaking eye when he was dwelling on anything good or great. He certainly was not happy at Eton, for his was a disposition that needed especial personal superintendence to watch and cherish and direct all his noble aspirations and the remarkable tenderness of his heart. He had great moral courage, and feared nothing but what was base, and false, and low. He never joined in the usual sports of the boys, and what is remarkable, never went out in a boat on the river. What I have here set down will be of little use to you, but will please you as a sincere and truthful and humble tribute to one whose good name was sadly

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 42.

whispered away. Shelley said to me when leaving Oxford under a cloud: 'Halliday, I am come to say good-bye to you, if you are not afraid to be seen with me!' I saw him once again in the autumn of 1814, when he was glad to introduce me to his wife. I think he said he was just come from Ireland. You have done quite right in applying to me direct, and I am only sorry that I have no anecdotes or letters of that period to furnish

I am, yours truly,

WALTER S HALLIDAY.<sup>1</sup>

This is the only direct testimony to Shelley's Eton life from one who knew him there. It contains two instances of how little value can be attached to any other than such direct testimony. That at that time he never went out in a boat on the river I believe to be strictly true: nevertheless Captain Medwin says: 'He told me the greatest delight he experienced at Eton was from boating. . . . He never lost the fondness with which he regarded the Thames, no new acquaintance when he went to Eton, for at Brentford we had more than once played the truant, and rowed to Kew, and once to Richmond'. But these truant excursions were exceptional. His affection for boating began at a much later period, as I shall have occasion to notice. The second instance is: 'I think he said he was just come from Ireland'. In the autumn of 1814 it was not from Ireland, but from the Continent that he had just returned.

Captain Medwin's *Life of Shelley* abounds with inaccuracies; not intentional misrepresentations, but misapprehensions and errors of memory. Several of these occur in reference to Shelley's boyish passion for his cousin, Harriet Grove. This, like Lord Byron's early love for Miss Chaworth, came to nothing. But most boys of any feeling and imagination have some such passion, and, as in these instances, it usually comes to nothing. Much more has been made of both these affairs than they are worth. It is probable that few of Johnson's poets passed through their boyhood without a similar attachment, but if it came at all under the notice of our literary Hercules, he did not think it worth recording. I shall notice this love affair in its proper place, but chiefly for the sake of separating from it one or two matters which have been erroneously assigned to it.

Shelley often spoke to me of Eton, and of the persecutions he had endured from the elder boys, with feelings of abhorrence which I never heard him express in an equal degree in relation to any other subject, except when he spoke of Lord Chancellor

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 41.

Eldon. He told me that he had been provoked into striking a penknife through the hand of one of his young tyrants, and pinning it to the desk, and that this was the cause of his leaving Eton prematurely: but his imagination often presented past events to him as they might have been, not as they were. Such a circumstance must have been remembered by others if it had actually occurred. But if the occurrence was imaginary, it was in a memory of cordial detestation that the imagination arose.

Mr. Hogg vindicates the system of fagging, and thinks he was himself the better for the discipline in after life. But Mr. Hogg is a man of imperturbable temper and adamantine patience: and with all this he may have fallen into good hands, for all big boys are not ruffians. But Shelley was a subject totally unfit for the practice in its best form, and he seems to have experienced it in its worst.

At Eton he became intimate with Doctor Lind, 'a name well known among the professors of medical science', says Mrs. Shelley, who proceeds:

'This man', Shelley has often said, 'is exactly what an old man ought to be. Free, calm-spirited, full of benevolence, and even of youthful ardour; his eye seemed to burn with supernatural spirit beneath his brow, shaded by his venerable white locks; he was tall, vigorous, and healthy in his body, tempered, as it had ever been, by his amiable mind. I owe to that man far, ah! far more than I owe to my father; he loved me, and I shall never forget our long talks, when he breathed the spirit of the kindest tolerance and the purest wisdom. Once, when I was very ill during the holidays, as I was recovering from a fever which had attacked my brain, a servant overheard my father consult about sending me to a private mad-house. I was a favourite among all our servants, so this fellow came and told me, as I lay sick in bed. My horror was beyond words, and I might soon have been mad indeed if they had proceeded in their iniquitous plan. I had one hope. I was master of three pounds in money, and with the servant's help I contrived to send an express to Dr. Lind. He came, and I shall never forget his manner on that occasion. His profession gave him authority; his love for me ardour. He dared my father to execute his purpose, and his menaces had the desired effect.'<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hogg subjoins:

I have heard Shelley speak of his fever, and this scene at Field Place, more than once, in nearly the same terms as Mrs. Shelley adopts. It appeared to myself, and to others also, that his recollections were those of a person not quite recovered from a fever, and still disturbed by the horrors of the disease.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, i, p. 35.

However this may have been, the idea that his father was continually on the watch for a pretext to lock him up, haunted him through life, and a mysterious intimation of his father's intention to effect such a purpose was frequently received by him, and communicated to his friends as a demonstration of the necessity under which he was placed of changing his residence and going abroad.

I pass over his boyish schemes for raising the devil, of which much is said in Mr. Hogg's book. He often spoke of them to me; but the principal fact of which I have any recollection was one which he treated only as a subject of laughter—the upsetting into the fire in his chamber at Eton of a frying-pan full of diabolical ingredients, and the rousing up all the inmates in his dame's house in the dead of the night by the abominable effluvia. If he had ever had any faith in the possible success of his incantations, he had lost it before I knew him.

We now come to the first really important event of his life—his expulsion from Oxford.

At University College, Oxford, in October 1810, Mr. Hogg first became acquainted with him. In their first conversation Shelley was exalting the physical sciences, especially chemistry. Mr. Hogg says:

As I felt but little interest in the subject of his conversation, I had leisure to examine, and I may add to admire, the appearance of my very extraordinary guest. It was a sum of many contradictions. His figure was slight and fragile, and yet his bones and joints were large and strong. He was tall, but he stooped so much that he seemed of a low stature. His clothes were expensive, and made according to the most approved mode of the day; but they were tumbled, rumpled, unbrushed. His gestures were abrupt and sometimes violent, occasionally even awkward, yet more frequently gentle and graceful. His complexion was delicate and almost feminine, of the purest white and red; yet he was tanned and freckled by exposure to the sun. . . . His features, his whole face, and particularly his head, were in fact unusually small; yet the last *appeared* of a remarkable bulk, for his hair was long and bushy . . . he often rubbed it up fiercely with his hands, or passed his fingers through his locks unconsciously, so that it was singularly wild and rough. . . . His features were not symmetrical (the mouth perhaps excepted); yet was the effect of the whole extremely powerful. They breathed an animation, a fire, an enthusiasm, a vivid and preternatural intelligence, that I never met with in any other countenance. Nor was the moral expression less beautiful than the intellectual. . . . I admired the enthusiasm of my new acquaintance, his ardour in the cause of science, and his thirst for knowledge. But there was one physical blemish that threatened to neutralize all his excellence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 47.



This blemish was his voice.

There is a good deal in these volumes about Shelley's discordant voice. This defect he certainly had; but it was chiefly observable when he spoke under excitement. Then his voice was not only dissonant, like a jarring string, but he spoke in sharp fourths, the most displeasing sequence of sound that can fall on the human ear: but it was scarcely so when he spoke calmly, and not at all so when he read; on the contrary, he seemed then to have his voice under perfect command: it was good both in tune and in tone; it was low and soft, but clear, distinct, and expressive. I have heard him read almost all Shakespeare's tragedies, and some of his more poetical comedies, and it was a pleasure to hear him read them.

Mr. Hogg's description of Shelley's personal appearance gives a better idea of him than the portrait prefixed to his work, which is similar to that prefixed to the work of Mr. Trelawny, except that Mr. Trelawny's is lithographed<sup>1</sup> and Mr. Hogg's is engraved. These portraits do not impress themselves on me as likenesses. They seem to me to want the true outline of Shelley's features, and above all, to want their true expression. There is a portrait in the Florentine Gallery which represents him to me much more truthfully. It is that of Antonio Leisman, No. 155 of the *Ritratti de' Pittori*, in the Paris republication.

The two friends had made together a careful analysis of the doctrines of Hume. The papers were in Shelley's custody, and from a small part of them he made a little book, which he had printed, and which he sent by post to such persons as he thought would be willing to enter into a metaphysical discussion. He sent it under an assumed name, with a note, requesting that if the recipient were willing to answer the tract, the answer should be sent to a specified address in London. He received many

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Trelawny says: 'With reference to the likeness of Shelley in this volume, I must add, that he never sat to a professional artist. In 1819, at Rome, a daughter of the celebrated Curran began a portrait of him in oil, which she never finished, and left in an altogether flat and inanimate state. In 1891 or 1822, his friend Williams made a spirited water-colour drawing, which gave a very good idea of the poet. Out of these materials Mrs. Williams, on her return to England after the death of Shelley, got Clint to compose a portrait, which the few who knew Shelley in the last year of his life thought very like him. The water-colour drawing has been lost, so that the portrait done by Clint is the only one of any value. I have had it copied and lithographed by Mr. Vinter, an artist distinguished both for the fidelity and refinement of his works, and it is now published for the first time'. [T. L. P.] [This passage occurs at the end of Trelawny's Preface to the *Recollections*.]

answers; but in due time the little work and its supposed authors were denounced to the college authorities.

It was a fine spring morning, on Lady Day, in the year 1811 [says Mr. Hogg], when I went to Shelley's rooms. He was absent; but before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened.

'I am expelled,' he said, as soon as he had recovered himself a little. 'I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago; I went to the common room, where I found our master, and two or three of the fellows. The master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose he put the question. No answer was given; but the master loudly and angrily repeated: "Are you the author of this book?" "If I can judge from your manner," I said, "you are resolved to punish me if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country." "Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?"' the master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice.

Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentlemanlike deportment, saying: 'I have experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar violence is, but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly but firmly that I was determined not to answer any questions respecting the publication on the table'.

'He immediately repeated his demand; I persisted in my refusal. And he said furiously: "Then you are expelled; and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning at the latest"'.  
 'One of the fellows took up two papers, and handed one of them to me; here it is.' He produced a regular sentence of expulsion, drawn up in due form, under the seal of the college. Shelley was full of spirit and courage, frank, and fearless; but he was likewise shy, unassuming, and eminently sensitive. I have been with him in many trying situations of his after-life, but I never saw him so deeply shocked and so cruelly agitated as on this occasion.

A nice sense of honour shrinks from the most distant touch of disgrace—even from the insults of those men whose contumely can bring no shame. He sat on the sofa, repeating with convulsive vehemence the words: 'Expelled, expelled!' his head shaking with emotion, and his whole frame quivering.<sup>1</sup>

A similar scene followed with Mr. Hogg himself, which he very graphically describes. The same questions, the same refusal to answer them, the same sentence of expulsion, and a peremptory order to quit the college early on the morrow. And accordingly, early on the next morning, Shelley and his friend took their departure from Oxford.

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 168.

I accept Mr. Hogg's account of this transaction as substantially correct. In Shelley's account of it to me there were material differences; and making all allowance for the degree in which, as already noticed, his imagination coloured the past, there is one matter of fact which remains inexplicable. According to him, his expulsion was a matter of great form and solemnity; there was a sort of public assembly, before which he pleaded his own cause, in a long oration, in the course of which he called on the illustrious spirits who had shed glory on those walls to look down on their degenerate successors. Now, the inexplicable matter to which I have alluded is this: he showed me an Oxford newspaper, containing a full report of the proceedings, with his own oration at great length. I suppose the pages of that diurnal were not deathless,<sup>1</sup> and that it would now be vain to search for it; but that he had it, and showed it to me, is absolutely certain. His oration may have been, as some of Cicero's published orations were, a speech in the potential mood; one which might, could, should, or would, have been spoken: but how in that case it got into the Oxford newspaper passes conjecture.

His expulsion from Oxford brought to a summary conclusion his boyish passion for Miss Harriet Grove. She would have no more to say to him; but I cannot see from his own letters, and those of Miss Hellen Shelley, that there had ever been much love on her side; neither can I find any reason to believe that it continued long on his. Mr. Middleton follows Captain Medwin, who was determined that on Shelley's part it should be an enduring passion, and pressed into its service as testimonies some matters which had nothing to do with it. He<sup>2</sup> says *Queen Mab* was dedicated to Harriet Grove, whereas it was certainly dedicated to Harriet Shelley; he even prints the dedication with the title: 'To Harriet G.', whereas in the original the name of Harriet is only followed by asterisks; and of another little poem, he says: 'That Shelley's disappointment in love affected him acutely, may be seen by some lines inscribed erroneously, "On F. G.", instead of "H. G.", and doubtless of a much earlier date than assigned by Mrs. Shelley to the fragment'.

<sup>1</sup> Registered to fame eternal  
In deathless pages of diurnal.

*Hudibras.* [T. L. P.]

[This is misquoted from Part I, canto iii, ll. 19-20:

'And register'd by fame eternal,  
In deathless pages of diurnal.']

<sup>2</sup> Medwin, not Middleton.

Now, I know the circumstances to which the fragment refers. The initials of the lady's name were F. G., and the date assigned to the fragment, 1817, was strictly correct. The intrinsic evidence of both poems will show their utter inapplicability to Miss Harriet Grove.

First let us see what Shelley himself says of her, in letters to Mr. Hogg:

23 Dec. 1810. Her disposition was in all probability divested of the enthusiasm by which mine is characterized. . . . My sister attempted sometimes to plead my cause, but unsuccessfully. She said: 'Even supposing I take your representation of your brother's qualities and sentiments, which, as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although you may not be aware of the exaggeration, what right have I, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy which must end in delusive disappointment when he finds how really inferior I am to the being his heated imagination has pictured?'

26 Dec. 1810. Circumstances have operated in such a manner that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible, whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind, which told her not to deceive another, not to give him the possibility of disappointment.

3 Jan. 1811. She is no longer mine. She abhors me as a sceptic, as what she was before.

11 Jan. 1811. She is gone. She is lost to me for ever. She is married—married to a clod of earth. She will become as insensible herself: all those fine capabilities will moulder

Next let us see what Miss Hellen Shelley says of the matter:

His disappointment in losing the lady of his love had a great effect upon him . . . It was not put an end to by *mutual* consent; but both parties were very young, and her father did not think the marriage would be for his daughter's happiness. He, however, with truly honourable feeling, would not have persisted in his objection if his daughter had considered herself bound by a promise to my brother; but this was not the case, and time healed the wound by means of another Harriet, whose name and similar complexion perhaps attracted the attention of my brother.<sup>1</sup>

And lastly, let us see what the young lady's brother (C. H. G.) says of it:

After our visit at Field Place [in the year 1810], we went to my brother's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, where Bysshe, his mother, and Elizabeth joined us, and a very happy month we spent. Bysshe was full of life and spirits, and very well pleased with his successful devotion to my sister. In the course of that summer, to the best of my recollection, after we had retired into Wiltshire, a continual

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, i, p. 27.

correspondence was going on, as I believe, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet.<sup>1</sup> But she became uneasy at the tone of his letters on speculative subjects, at first consulting my mother, and subsequently my father also, on the subject. This led at last, though I cannot exactly tell how, to the dissolution of an engagement between Bysshe and my sister which had previously been permitted both by his father and mine.

We have here, I think, as unimpassioned a damsel as may be met in a summer's day. And now let us see the poems.

First, the dedication of *Queen Mab*: bearing in mind that the poem was begun in 1812, and finished in 1813, and that, to say nothing of the unsuitability of the offering to her who two years before had abhorred him as a sceptic and married a clod, she had never done or said any one thing that would justify her love being described as that which had warded off from him the scorn of the world: quite the contrary: as far as in her lay, she had embittered it to the utmost.

TO HARRIET . . .

Whose is the love that, gleaming thro' the world,  
Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?  
Whose is the warm and partial praise,  
Virtue's most sweet reward?

Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul  
Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?  
Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,  
And loved mankind the more?

Harriet! on thine:—thou wert my purer mind,  
Thou wert the inspiration of my song;  
Thine are these early wilding flowers,  
Though garlanded by me.

Then press into thy breast this pledge of love,  
And know, though time may change and years may roll  
Each flowret gathered in my heart  
It consecrates to thine.

Next the verses on F. G.:

Her voice did quiver as we parted,  
Yet knew I not that heart was broken  
From which it came, and I departed,  
Heeding not the words then spoken.  
Misery—oh, Misery!  
This world is all too wide for thee!

Can anything be more preposterously inappropriate to his parting with Harriet Grove? These verses relate to a far more

<sup>1</sup> In Charles Grove's letter, printed by Hogg, the latter part of this sentence runs: 'a continual correspondence was going on, as, I believe, there had been before, between Bysshe and my sister Harriet'.

interesting person and a deeply tragic event; but they belong, as I have said, to the year 1817, a later period than this article embraces.<sup>1</sup>

From Oxford the two friends proceeded to London, where they took a joint lodging, in which, after a time, Shelley was left alone, living uncomfortably on precarious resources. It was here that the second Harriet consoled him for the loss of the first, who, I feel thoroughly convinced, never more troubled his repose.

To the circumstances of Shelley's first marriage I find no evidence but in my own recollection of what he told me respecting it. He often spoke to me of it; and with all allowance for the degree in which his imagination coloured events, I see no improbability in the narration.

Harriet Westbrook, he said, was a schoolfellow of one of his sisters; and when, after his expulsion from Oxford, he was in London, without money, his father having refused him all assistance, this sister had requested her fair schoolfellow to be the medium of conveying to him such small sums as she and her sisters could afford to send, and other little presents which they thought would be acceptable. Under these circumstances the ministry of the young and beautiful girl presented itself like that of a guardian angel, and there was a charm about their intercourse which he readily persuaded himself could not be exhausted in the duration of life. The result was that in August 1811 they eloped to Scotland, and were married in Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> Their journey had absorbed their stock of money. They took a lodging, and Shelley immediately told the landlord who they were, what they had come for, and the exhaustion of their resources, and asked him if he would take them in, and advance them money to get married and to carry them on till they could get a remittance. This the man agreed to do, on condition that Shelley would treat him and his friends to a supper in honour of the occasion. It was arranged accordingly; but the man was more obtrusive and officious than Shelley was disposed to tolerate. The marriage was concluded, and in the evening Shelley and his bride were alone together, when the man tapped at their door. Shelley opened it, and the landlord said to him: 'It is customary here at weddings for the guests to come in, in the middle of the night, and wash the bride with

<sup>1</sup> Shelley commemorated in these lines his last parting from Fanny Godwin, who committed suicide in the October of 1816.

<sup>2</sup> Not at Gretna Green, as stated by Captain Medwin. [T. L. P.]

whisky'. 'I immediately', said Shelley, 'caught up my brace of pistols, and pointing them both at him, said to him—I have had enough of your impertinence; if you give me any more of it I will blow your brains out; on which he ran or rather tumbled down stairs, and I bolted the doors.'

The custom of washing the bride with whisky is more likely to have been so made known to him than to have been imagined by him.

Leaving Edinburgh, the young couple led for some time a wandering life. At the lakes they were kindly received by the Duke of Norfolk, and by others through his influence. They then went to Ireland, landed at Cork, visited the Lakes of Killarney, and stayed some time in Dublin, where Shelley became a warm repealer and emancipator. They then went to the Isle of Man, then to Nant Gwillt<sup>1</sup> in Radnorshire, then to Lymouth near Barnstaple,<sup>2</sup> then came for a short time to London; then went to reside in a furnished house belonging to Mr. Maddocks at Tanyrallt,<sup>3</sup> near Tremadoc, in Caernarvonshire. Their residence at this place was made chiefly remarkable by an imaginary attack on his life, which was followed by their immediately leaving Wales.

Mr. Hogg inserts several letters relative to this romance of a night: the following extract from one of Harriet Shelley's, dated from Dublin, 12 March 1813, will give a sufficient idea of it:

Mr. Shelley promised you a recital of the horrible events that caused us to leave Wales. I have undertaken the task, as I wish to spare him, in the present nervous state of his health, everything that can recall to his mind the horrors of that night, which I will relate.

On the night of the 26th February we retired to bed between ten and eleven o'clock. We had been in bed about half an hour, when Mr. S—— heard a noise proceeding from one of the parlours. He immediately went downstairs with two pistols which he had loaded

<sup>1</sup> Nant Gwillt, the Wild Brook, flows into the Elan (a tributary of the Wye), about five miles above Rhayader. Above the confluence, each stream runs in a rocky channel through a deep narrow valley. In each of these valleys is or was a spacious mansion, named from the respective streams. Cwm Elan House was the seat of Mr. Grove, whom Shelley had visited there before his marriage in 1811. Nant Gwillt House, when Shelley lived in it in 1812, was inhabited by a farmer, who let some of the best rooms in lodgings. At a subsequent period I stayed a day in Rhayader for the sake of seeing this spot. It is a scene of singular beauty. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> He had introduced himself by letter to Mr. Godwin, and they carried on a correspondence some time before they met. Mr. Godwin, after many pressing invitations, went to Lymouth on an intended visit, but when he arrived the birds had flown. [T. L. P.]

<sup>3</sup> *Tan-yr-allt*—Under the precipice. [T. L. P.]

that night, expecting to have occasion for them. He went into the billiard-room, when he heard footsteps retreating; he followed into another little room, which was called an office. He there saw a man in the act of quitting the room through a glass window which opened into the shrubbery; the man fired at Mr. S——, which he avoided. Bysshe then fired, but it flashed in the pan. The man then knocked Bysshe down, and they struggled on the ground. Bysshe then fired his second pistol, which he thought wounded him in the shoulder, as he uttered a shriek and got up, when he said these words: 'By God, I will be revenged. I will murder your wife, and will ravish your sister! By God, I will be revenged!' He then fled, as we hoped for the night. Our servants were not gone to bed, but were just going when this horrible affair happened. This was about eleven o'clock. We all assembled in the parlour, where we remained for two hours. Mr. S—— then advised us to retire, thinking it was impossible he would make a second attack. We left Bysshe and our man-servant—who had only arrived that day, and who knew nothing of the house—to sit up. I had been in bed three hours when I heard a pistol go off. I immediately ran downstairs, when I perceived that Bysshe's flannel gown had been shot through, and the window-curtain. Bysshe had sent Daniel to see what hour it was, when he heard a noise at the window; he went there, and a man thrust his arm through the glass and fired at him. Thank heaven! the ball went through his gown and he remained unhurt. Mr. S—— happened to stand sideways; had he stood fronting, the ball must have killed him. Bysshe fired his pistol, but it would not go off; he then aimed a blow at him with an old sword which we found in the house. The assassin attempted to get the sword from him, and just as he was pulling it away Dan rushed into the room, when he made his escape. This was at four in the morning. It had been a most dreadful night; the wind was as loud as thunder, and the rain descended in torrents. Nothing has been heard of him, and we have every reason to believe it was no stranger, as there is a man . . . who, the next morning, went and told the shopkeepers that it was a tale of Mr. Shelley's to impose upon them, that he might leave the country without paying his bills. This they believed, and none of them attempted to do anything towards his discovery. We left Tanyralt on Sunday.

Mr. Hogg subjoins:

Persons acquainted with the localities and with the circumstances, and who had carefully investigated the matter, were unanimous in the opinion that no such attack was ever made.

I may state more particularly the result of the investigation to which Mr. Hogg alludes. I was in North Wales in the summer of 1813, and heard the matter much talked of. Persons who had examined the premises on the following morning had found that the grass of the lawn appeared to have been much trampled and rolled on, but there were no footmarks on the wet ground, except



between the beaten spot and the window; and the impression of the ball on the wainscot showed that the pistol had been fired towards the window, and not from it. This appeared conclusive as to the whole series of operations having taken place from within. The mental phenomena in which this sort of semi-delusion originated will be better illustrated by one which occurred at a later period, and which, though less tragical in its appearances, was more circumstantial in its development, and more perseveringly adhered to. It will not come within the scope of this article.

I saw Shelley for the first time in 1812, just before he went to Tanyrallt. I saw him again once or twice before I went to North Wales in 1813. On my return he was residing at Bracknell, and invited me to visit him there. This I did, and found him with his wife Harriet, her sister Eliza, and his newly-born daughter Ianthe.

Mr. Hogg says:

This accession to his family did not appear to afford him any gratification, or to create an interest. He never spoke of this child to me, and to this hour I never set eyes on her.

Mr. Hogg is mistaken about Shelley's feelings as to his first child. He was extremely fond of it, and would walk up and down a room with it in his arms for a long time together, singing to it a monotonous melody of his own making, which ran on the repetition of a word of his own making. His song was 'Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani, Yáhmani'.<sup>1</sup> It did not please me, but, what was more important, it pleased the child, and lulled it when it was fretful. Shelley was extremely fond of his children. He was pre-eminently an affectionate father. But to this first-born there were accompaniments which did not please him. The child had a wet-nurse whom he did not like, and was much looked after by his wife's sister, whom he intensely disliked. I have often thought that if Harriet had nursed her own child, and if this sister had not lived with them, the link of their married love would not have been so readily broken. But of this hereafter, when we come to speak of the separation.

At Bracknell Shelley was surrounded by a numerous society, all in a great measure of his own opinions in relation to religion and politics, and the larger portion of them in relation to

<sup>1</sup> The tune was the uniform repetition of three notes, not very true in their intervals. The nearest resemblance to it will be found in the second, third, and fourth of a minor key: B C D, for example, on the key of A natural: a crotchet and two quavers. [T. L. P.]

vegetable diet. But they wore their rue with a difference. Every one of them adopting some of the articles of the faith of their general church, had each nevertheless some predominant crotchet of his or her own, which left a number of open questions for earnest and not always temperate discussion. I was sometimes irreverent enough to laugh at the fervour with which opinions utterly uncondusive to any practical result were battled for as matters of the highest importance to the well-being of mankind; Harriet Shelley was always ready to laugh with me, and we thereby both lost caste with some of the more hot-headed of the party. Mr. Hogg was not there during my visit, but he knew the whole of the persons there assembled, and has given some account of them under their initials, which for all public purposes are as well as their names.

The person among them best worth remembering was the gentleman whom Mr. Hogg calls J. F. N.,<sup>1</sup> of whom he relates some anecdotes.

I will add one or two from my own experience. He was an estimable man, and an agreeable companion, and he was not the less amusing that he was the absolute impersonation of a single theory, or rather of two single theories rolled into one. He held that all diseases and all aberrations, moral and physical, had their origin in the use of animal food and of fermented and spirituous liquors; that the universal adoption of a diet of roots, fruits, and distilled<sup>2</sup> water, would restore the golden age of universal health, purity, and peace; that this most ancient and sublime morality was mystically inculcated in the most ancient Zodiac, which was that of Dendera; that this Zodiac was divided into two hemispheres, the upper hemisphere being the realm of Oromazes or the principle of good, the lower that of Ahrimanes or the principle of evil; that each of these hemispheres was again divided into two compartments, and that the four lines of division radiating from the centre were the prototype of the Christian cross. The two compartments of Oromazes were those of Uranus or Brahma the Creator, and of Saturn or Veishnu the Preserver. The two compartments of Ahrimanes were those of Jupiter or Seva the Destroyer, and of Apollo or Krishna the Restorer. The great moral doctrine was thus symbolized in the Zodiacal signs: In the first compartment, Taurus the Bull, having in the ancient Zodiac a torch in his mouth, was the type

<sup>1</sup> Newton.

<sup>2</sup> He held that water in its natural state was full of noxious impurities, which were only to be got rid of by distillation. [T. L. P.]

of eternal light. Cancer the Crab was the type of celestial matter, sleeping under the all-covering water, on which Brahma floated in a lotus-flower for millions of ages. From the union, typified by Gemini, of light and celestial matter, issued in the second compartment Leo, Primogenial Love, mounted on the back of a Lion, who produced the pure and perfect nature of things in Virgo, and Libra the Balance denoted the coincidence of the ecliptic with the equator, and the equality of man's happy existence. In the third compartment, the first entrance of evil into the system was typified by the change of celestial into terrestrial matter — Cancer into Scorpio. Under this evil influence man became a hunter, Sagittarius the Archer, and pursued the wild animals, typified by Capricorn. Then, with animal food and cookery, came death into the world, and all our woe. But in the fourth compartment, Dhanwantari or Æsculapius, Aquarius the Waterman, arose from the sea, typified by Pisces the Fish, with a jug of pure water and a bunch of fruit, and brought back the period of universal happiness under Aries the Ram, whose benignant ascendancy was the golden fleece of the Argonauts, and the true talisman of Oromazes.

He saw the Zodiac in everything. I was walking with him one day on a common near Bracknell, when we came on a public house which had the sign of the Horse-shoes. They were four on the sign, and he immediately determined that this number had been handed down from remote antiquity as representative of the compartments of the Zodiac. He stepped into the public-house, and said to the landlord: 'Your sign is the Horse-shoes?' 'Yes, sir.' 'This sign has always four Horse-shoes?' 'Why mostly, sir.' 'Not always?' 'I think I have seen three.' 'I cannot divide the Zodiac into three. But it is mostly four. Do you know why it is mostly four?' 'Why sir, I suppose because a horse has four legs.' He bounced out in great indignation, and as soon as I joined him, he said to me: 'Did you ever see such a fool?'

I have also very agreeable reminiscences of Mrs. B. and her daughter Cornelia. Of these ladies Shelley says:

I have begun to learn Italian again. Cornelia assists me in this language. Did I not once tell you that I thought her cold and reserved? She is the reverse of this, as she is the reverse of everything bad. She inherits all the divinity of her mother.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Hogg 'could never learn why Shelley called Mrs. B.

<sup>1</sup> Hogg, *Life of Shelley*, ii, p. 136.

Meimouné'. In fact he called her, not Meimouné, but Maimuna, from Southey's *Thalaba*:

Her face was as a damsel's face  
And yet her hair was grey.

She was a young-looking woman for her age, and her hair was as white as snow.

About the end of 1813 Shelley was troubled by one of his most extraordinary delusions. He fancied that a fat old woman who sat opposite to him in a mail coach was afflicted with elephantiasis, that the disease was infectious and incurable, and that he had caught it from her. He was continually on the watch for its symptoms; his legs were to swell to the size of an elephant's, and his skin was to be crumpled over like goose-skin. He would draw the skin of his own hands, arms, and neck very tight, and if he discovered any deviation from smoothness, he would seize the person next to him, and endeavour by a corresponding pressure to see if any corresponding deviation existed. He often startled young ladies in an evening party by this singular process, which was as instantaneous as a flash of lightning. His friends took various methods of dispelling the delusion. I quoted to him the words of Lucretius:

Est elephas morbus, qui propter flumina Nili  
Gignitur Aegypto in media, neque præterea usquam.

He said these verses were the greatest comfort he had. When he found that, as the days rolled on, his legs retained their proportion, and his skin its smoothness, the delusion died away.

I have something more to say belonging to this year 1813, but it will come better in connection with the events of the succeeding year. In the meantime I will mention one or two traits of character in which chronology is unimportant.

It is to be remarked that, with the exception of the clergyman from whom he received his first instructions, the Reverend Mr. Edwards, of Horsham, Shelley never came, directly or indirectly, under any authority, public or private, for which he entertained, or had much cause to entertain, any degree of respect. His own father, the Brentford schoolmaster, the headmaster of Eton, the Master and Fellows of his college at Oxford, the Lord Chancellor Eldon, all successively presented themselves to him in the light of tyrants and oppressors. It was perhaps from the recollection of his early preceptor that he felt a sort of poetical regard for country clergymen, and was always pleased when he fell in with



CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN

*From a miniature by William Dunlap, in the possession of Mr. H. L. Pratt of New York, U.S..*



one who had a sympathy with him in classical literature, and was willing to pass *sub silentio* the debatable ground between them. But such an one was of rare occurrence. This recollection may also have influenced his feeling under the following transitory impulse.

He had many schemes of life. Amongst them all, the most singular that ever crossed his mind was that of entering the Church. Whether he had ever thought of it before, or whether it only arose on the moment, I cannot say: the latter is most probable; but I well remember the occasion. We were walking in the early summer through a village where there was a good vicarage house, with a nice garden, and the front wall of the vicarage was covered with corchorus in full flower, a plant less common then than it has since become. He stood some time admiring the vicarage wall. The extreme quietness of the scene, the pleasant pathway through the village churchyard, and the brightness of the summer morning, apparently concurred to produce the impression under which he suddenly said to me: 'I feel strongly inclined to enter the Church'. 'What,' I said, 'to become a clergyman, with your ideas of the faith?' 'Assent to the supernatural part of it', he said, 'is merely technical. Of the moral doctrines of Christianity I am a more decided disciple than many of its more ostentatious professors. And consider for a moment how much good a good clergyman may do. In his teaching as a scholar and a moralist; in his example as a gentleman and a man of regular life; in the consolation of his personal intercourse and of his charity among the poor, to whom he may often prove a most beneficent friend when they have no other to comfort them. It is an admirable institution that admits the possibility of diffusing such men over the surface of the land. And am I to deprive myself of the advantages of this admirable institution because there are certain technicalities to which I cannot give my adhesion, but which I need not bring prominently forward?' I told him I thought he would find more restraint in the office than would suit his aspirations. He walked on some time thoughtfully, then started another subject, and never returned to that of entering the Church.

He was especially fond of the novels of Brown—Charles Brockden Brown, the American, who died at the age of thirty-nine.

The first of these novels was *Wieland*. Wieland's father passed much of his time alone in a summer-house, where he died of spontaneous combustion. This summer-house made a great impression on Shelley, and in looking for a country house he

always examined if he could find such a summer-house, or a place to erect one.

The second was *Ormond*. The heroine of this novel, Constantia Dudley, held one of the highest places, if not the very highest place, in Shelley's idealities of female character.

The third was *Edgar Huntley; or, the Sleep-walker*. In this his imagination was strangely captivated by the picture of Clitheroe in his sleep digging a grave under a tree.

The fourth was *Arthur Mervyn*: chiefly remarkable for the powerful description of the yellow fever in Philadelphia and the adjacent country, a subject previously treated in *Ormond*. No descriptions of pestilence surpass these of Brown. The transfer of the hero's affections from a simple peasant-girl to a rich Jewess, displeased Shelley extremely, and he could only account for it on the ground that it was the only way in which Brown could bring his story to an uncomfortable conclusion. The three preceding tales had ended tragically.

These four tales were unquestionably works of great genius, and were remarkable for the way in which natural causes were made to produce the semblance of supernatural effects. The superstitious terror of romance could scarcely be more strongly excited than by the perusal of *Wieland*.

Brown wrote two other novels, *Jane Talbot* and *Philip Stanley*, in which he abandoned this system, and confined himself to the common business of life. They had little comparative success.

Brown's four novels, Schiller's *Robbers*, and Goethe's *Faust* were, of all the works with which he was familiar, those which took the deepest root in his mind, and had the strongest influence in the formation of his character. He was an assiduous student of the great classical poets, and among these his favourite heroines were Nausicaa and Antigone. I do not remember that he greatly admired any of our old English poets, excepting Shakespeare and Milton. He devotedly admired Wordsworth and Coleridge, and in a minor degree Southey: these had great influence on his style, and Coleridge especially on his imagination; but admiration is one thing and assimilation is another; and nothing so blended itself with the structure of his interior mind as the creations of Brown. Nothing stood so clearly before his thoughts as a perfect combination of the purely ideal and possibly real, as Constantia Dudley.

He was particularly pleased with Wordsworth's stanzas written in a pocket copy of Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*. He



said the fifth of these stanzas always reminded him of me. I told him the four first stanzas were in many respects applicable to him. He said: 'It was a remarkable instance of Wordsworth's insight into nature, that he should have made intimate friends of two imaginary characters so essentially dissimilar, and yet severally so true to the actual characters of two friends, in a poem written long before they were known to each other, and while they were both boys, and totally unknown to him'.

The delight of Wordsworth's first personage in the gardens of the happy castle, the restless spirit that drove him to wander, the exhaustion with which he returned and abandoned himself to repose, might all in these stanzas have been sketched to the life from Shelley. The end of the fourth stanza is especially apposite:

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was  
Whenever from our valley he withdrew;  
For happier soul no living creature has  
Than he had, being here the long day through.  
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo:  
*Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong :*  
*But verse was what he had been wedded to ;*  
*And his own mind did like a tempest strong*  
*Come to him thus, and drive<sup>1</sup> the weary wight along.*

He often repeated to me, as applicable to himself, a somewhat similar passage from *Childe Harold*:

———— On the sea  
The boldest steer but where their ports invite:  
But there are wanderers o'er Eternity,  
Whose bark drives on and on, and anchor'd ne'er shall be.

His vegetable diet entered for something into his restlessness. When he was fixed in a place he adhered to this diet consistently and conscientiously, but it certainly did not agree with him; it made him weak and nervous, and exaggerated the sensitiveness of his imagination. Then arose those thick-coming fancies which almost invariably preceded his change of place. While he was living from inn to inn he was obliged to live, as he said, 'on what he could get'; that is to say, like other people. When he got well under this process he gave all the credit to locomotion, and held himself to have thus benefited, not in consequence of his change of regimen, but in spite of it. Once, when I was living in the country, I received a note from him wishing me to call on him in London. I did so, and found him ill in bed. He said: 'You are looking well. I suppose you go on in your old

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth wrote 'drove', not 'drive'.

way, living on animal food and fermented liquor?' I answered in the affirmative. 'And here', he said, 'you see a vegetable feeder overcome by disease.' I said: 'Perhaps the diet is the cause'. This he would by no means allow; but it was not long before he was again posting through some yet unvisited wilds, and recovering his health as usual, by living 'on what he could get'.

He had a prejudice against theatres which I took some pains to overcome. I induced him one evening to accompany me to a representation of the *School for Scandal*. When, after the scenes which exhibited Charles Surface in his jollity, the scene returned, in the fourth act, to Joseph's library, Shelley said to me: 'I see the purpose of this comedy. It is to associate virtue with bottles and glasses, and villany with books'. I had great difficulty to make him stay to the end. He often talked of 'the withering and perverting spirit of comedy'. I do not think he ever went to another. But I remember his absorbed attention to Miss O'Neill's performance of Bianca in *Fazio*, and it is evident to me that she was always in his thoughts when he drew the character of Beatrice in *The Cenci*.

In the season of 1817 I persuaded him to accompany me to the opera. The performance was *Don Giovanni*. Before it commenced he asked me if the opera was comic or tragic. I said it was composite—more comedy than tragedy. After the killing of the Commendatore, he said: 'Do you call this comedy?' By degrees he became absorbed in the music and action. I asked him what he thought of Ambrogetti? He said: 'He seems to be the very wretch he personates'. The opera was followed by a ballet, in which Mdlle. Milanie was the principal *danseuse*. He was enchanted with this lady; said he had never imagined such grace of motion; and the impression was permanent, for in a letter he afterwards wrote to me from Milan he said: 'They have no Mdlle. Milanie here'.

From this time till he finally left England he was an assiduous frequenter of the Italian opera. He delighted in the music of Mozart, and especially in the *Nozze di Figaro*, which was performed several times in the early part of 1818.

With the exception of *Fazio* I do not remember his having been pleased with any performance at an English theatre. Indeed, I do not remember his having been present at any but the two above mentioned. I tried in vain to reconcile him to comedy. I repeated to him one day, as an admirable specimen of diction and imagery, Michael Perez's soliloquy in his miserable

lodgings, from *Rule a Wife and Have a Wife*.<sup>1</sup> When I came to the passage:

There 's an old woman that 's now grown to marble,  
Dried in this brick-kiln: and she sits i' the chimney  
(Which is but three tiles, raised like a house of cards),  
The true proportion of an old smoked Sibyl.  
There is a young thing, too, that Nature meant  
For a maid-servant, but 'tis now a monster:  
She has a husk about her like a chestnut,  
With laziness, and living under the line here:  
And these two make a hollow sound together,  
Like frogs, or winds between two doors that murmur—

he said: 'There is comedy in its perfection. Society grinds down poor wretches into the dust of abject poverty, till they are scarcely recognizable as human beings; and then, instead of being treated as what they really are, subjects of the deepest pity, they are brought forward as grotesque monstrosities to be laughed at'. I said: 'You must admit the fineness of the expression'. 'It is true,' he answered; 'but the finer it is the worse it is, with such a perversion of sentiment.'

I postpone, as I have intimated, till after the appearance of Mr. Hogg's third and fourth volumes, the details of the circumstances which preceded Shelley's separation from his first wife, and those of the separation itself.

There never was a case which more strongly illustrated the truth of Payne Knight's observation, that 'the same kind of marriage, which usually ends a comedy, as usually begins a tragedy'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> By Beaumont and Fletcher.

<sup>2</sup> No person in his senses was ever led into enterprises of dangerous importance by the romantic desire of imitating the fictions of a drama. If the conduct of any persons is influenced by the examples exhibited in such fictions, it is that of young ladies in the affairs of love and marriage: but I believe that such influence is much more rare than severe moralists are inclined to suppose; since there were plenty of elopements and stolen matches before comedies or plays of any kind were known. If, however, there are any romantic minds which feel this influence, they may draw an awful lesson concerning its consequences from the same source, namely, that the same kind of marriage, which usually ends a comedy, as usually begins a tragedy.—*Principles of Taste*, Book III c. 2 sec. 17. [T. L. P.] [Peacock suppresses the quotation: 'viderunt primos argentea secula moechos' after 'were known'.]

## PART II

Y Gwir yn erbyn y Byd.  
The Truth against the World.

*Bardic Maxim.*

MR. HOGG's third and fourth volumes not having appeared, and the materials with which Sir Percy and Lady Shelley had supplied him having been resumed by them, and so much of them as it was thought desirable to publish having been edited by Lady Shelley,<sup>1</sup> with a connecting thread of narrative, I shall assume that I am now in possession of all the external information likely to be available towards the completion of my memoir; and I shall proceed to complete it accordingly, subject to the contingent addition of a postscript, if any subsequent publication should render it necessary.

Lady Shelley says in her preface:

We saw the book [Mr. Hogg's] for the first time when it was given to the world. It was impossible to imagine beforehand that from such materials a book could have been produced which has astonished and shocked those who have the greatest right to form an opinion on the character of Shelley; and it was with the most painful feelings of dismay that we perused what we could only look upon as a fantastic caricature, going forth to the public with my apparent sanction—for it was dedicated to myself

Our feelings of duty to the memory of Shelley left us no other alternative than to withdraw the materials which we had originally entrusted to his early friend, and which we could not but consider had been strangely misused; and to take upon ourselves the task of laying them before the public, connected only by as slight a thread of narrative as would suffice to make them intelligible to the reader.

I am very sorry, in the outset of this notice, to be under the necessity of dissenting from Lady Shelley respecting the facts of the separation of Shelley and Harriet.

Captain Medwin represented this separation to have taken place by mutual consent. Mr. Leigh Hunt and Mr. Middleton adopted this statement; and in every notice I have seen of it in print it has been received as an established truth.

Lady Shelley says:

Towards the close of 1813 estrangements, which for some time had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, came to a

<sup>1</sup> *Shelley Memorials*. From Authentic Sources. Edited by Lady Shelley. London: Smith and Elder. 1859. [T. L. P.]

crisis Separation ensued, and Mrs. Shelley returned to her father's house. Here she gave birth to her second child—a son, who died in 1826.

The occurrences of this painful epoch in Shelley's life, and of the causes which led to them, I am spared from relating. In Mary Shelley's own words: 'This is not the time to relate the truth; and I should reject any colouring of the truth. No account of these events has ever been given at all approaching reality in their details, either as regards himself or others, nor shall I further allude to them than to remark that the errors of action committed by a man as noble and generous as Shelley, may, as far as he only is concerned, be fearlessly avowed by those who loved him, in the firm conviction that, were they judged impartially, his character would stand in fairer and brighter light than that of any contemporary'.

Of those remaining who were intimate with Shelley at this time, each has given us a different version of this sad event, coloured by his own views or personal feelings. Evidently Shelley confided to none of these friends. We, who bear his name, and are of his family, have in our possession papers written by his own hand, which in after years may make the story of his life complete; and which few now living, except Shelley's own children, have ever perused.

One mistake, which has gone forth to the world, we feel ourselves called upon positively to contradict.

Harriet's death has sometimes been ascribed to Shelley. This is entirely false. There was no immediate connection whatever between her tragic end and any conduct on the part of her husband. It is true, however, that it was a permanent source of the deepest sorrow to him; for never during all his after-life did the dark shade depart which had fallen on his gentle and sensitive nature from the self-sought grave of the companion of his early youth.

This passage ends the sixth chapter. The seventh begins thus:

To the family of Godwin, Shelley had, from the period of his self-introduction at Keswick, been an object of interest; and the acquaintanceship which had sprung up between them during the poet's occasional visits to London had grown into a cordial friendship. It was in the society and sympathy of the Godwins that Shelley sought and found some relief in his present sorrow. He was still extremely young. His anguish, his isolation, his difference from other men, his gifts of genius and eloquent enthusiasm, made a deep impression on Godwin's daughter Mary, now a girl of sixteen, who had been accustomed to hear Shelley spoken of as something rare and strange. To her, as they met one eventful day in St. Pancras' churchyard, by her mother's grave, Bysshe, in burning words, poured forth the tale of his wild past—how he had suffered, how he had been misled; and how, if supported by her love, he hoped in future years to enrol his name with the wise and good who had done battle for their fellow-men, and been true through all adverse storms to the cause of humanity.

Unhesitatingly she placed her hand in his, and linked her fortune with his own; and most truthfully, as the remaining portion of these *Memorials* will prove, was the pledge of both redeemed.

I ascribe it to inexperience of authorship, that the sequence of words does not, in these passages, coincide with the sequence of facts: for in the order of words, the present sorrow would appear to be the death of Harriet. This however occurred two years and a half after the separation, and the union of his fate with Mary Godwin was simultaneous with it. Respecting this separation, whatever degree of confidence Shelley may have placed in his several friends, there are some facts which speak for themselves and admit of no misunderstanding.

The Scotch marriage had taken place in August 1811. In a letter which he wrote to a female friend sixteen months later (Dec. 10 1812), he had said:

How is Harriet a fine lady? You indirectly accuse her in your letter of this offence—to me the most unpardonable of all. The ease and simplicity of her habits, the unassuming plainness of her address, the uncalculated connection of her thought and speech, have ever formed in my eyes her greatest charms: and none of these are compatible with fashionable life, or the attempted assumption of its vulgar and noisy *éclat*. You have a prejudice to contend with in making me a convert to this last opinion of yours, which, so long as I have a living and daily witness to its futility before me, I fear will be insurmountable.—*Memorials*, p. 44.

Thus there had been no estrangement to the end of 1812. My own memory sufficiently attests that there was none in 1813.

From Bracknell, in the autumn of 1813, Shelley went to the Cumberland lakes; then to Edinburgh. In Edinburgh he became acquainted with a young Brazilian named Baptista, who had gone there to study medicine by his father's desire, and not from any vocation to the science, which he cordially abominated, as being all hypothesis, without the fraction of a basis of certainty to rest on. They corresponded after Shelley left Edinburgh, and subsequently renewed their intimacy in London. He was a frank, warm-hearted, very gentlemanly young man. He was a great enthusiast, and sympathized earnestly in all Shelley's views, even to the adoption of vegetable diet. He made some progress in a translation of *Queen Mab* into Portuguese. He showed me a sonnet, which he intended to prefix to his translation. It began:

Sublime Shelley, cantor di verdade!

and ended:

Surja *Queen Mab* a restaurar o mundo.

I have forgotten the intermediate lines. But he died early, of a disease of the lungs. The climate did not suit him, and he exposed himself to it incautiously.

Shelley returned to London shortly before Christmas, then took a furnished house for two or three months at Windsor, visiting London occasionally. In March 1814 he married Harriet a second time, according to the following certificate:

## MARRIAGES IN MARCH 1814

164. Percy Bysshe Shelley and Harriet Shelley (formerly Harriet Westbrook, Spinster, a Minor), both of this Parish, were remarried in this Church by Licence (the parties having been already married to each other according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of Scotland), in order to obviate all doubts that have arisen, or shall or may arise, touching or concerning the validity of the aforesaid Marriage (by and with the consent of John Westbrook, the natural and lawful father of the said Minor), this Twenty-fourth day of March, in the Year 1814.

By me,

EDWARD WILLIAMS, *Curate*.

This Marriage was solemnized between us	{ PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY, HARRIET SHELLEY, formerly Harriet Westbrook.
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In the presence of	{ JOHN WESTBROOK, JOHN STANLEY.
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The above is a true extract from the Register Book of Marriages belonging to the Parish of Saint George, Hanover-square; extracted thence this eleventh day of April, 1859.—By me,

H. WEIGHTMAN, *Curate*.

It is, therefore, not correct to say that 'estrangements which had been slowly growing came to a crisis towards the close of 1813'. The date of the above certificate is conclusive on the point. The second marriage could not have taken place under such circumstances. Divorce would have been better for both parties, and the dissolution of the first marriage could have been easily obtained in Scotland.

There was no estrangement, no shadow of a thought of separation, till Shelley became acquainted, not long after the second marriage, with the lady who was subsequently his second wife.

The separation did not take place by mutual consent. I cannot think that Shelley ever so represented it. He never did so to me: and the account which Harriet herself gave me of the

entire proceeding was decidedly contradictory of any such supposition.

He might well have said, after first seeing Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, 'Ut vidi! ut perii!' Nothing that I ever read in tale or history could present a more striking image of a sudden, violent, irresistible, uncontrollable passion, than that under which I found him labouring when, at his request, I went up from the country to call on him in London. Between his old feelings towards Harriet, *from whom he was not then separated*, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind 'suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection'. His eyes were blood-shot, his hair and dress disordered. He caught up a bottle of laudanum, and said: 'I never part from this'.<sup>1</sup> He added: 'I am always repeating to myself your lines from Sophocles:

Man's happiest lot is not to be;  
And when we tread life's thorny steep,  
Most blest are they, who earliest free  
Descend to death's eternal sleep.'

Again, he said more calmly: 'Every one who knows me must know that the partner of my life should be one who can feel poetry and understand philosophy. Harriet is a noble animal, but she can do neither'. I said: 'It always appeared to me that you were very fond of Harriet'. Without affirming or denying this, he answered: 'But you did not know how I hated her sister'.

The term 'noble animal' he applied to his wife, in conversation with another friend now living, intimating that the nobleness which he thus ascribed to her would induce her to

<sup>1</sup> In a letter to Mr. Trelawny, dated June 18th, 1822, Shelley says: 'You of course enter into society at Leghorn. Should you meet with any scientific person capable of preparing the *Prussic Acid, or Essential Oil of Bitter Almonds*, I should regard it as a great kindness if you could procure me a small quantity. It requires the greatest caution in preparation, and ought to be highly concentrated. I would give any price for this medicine. You remember we talked of it the other night, and we both expressed a wish to possess it. My wish was serious, and sprung from the desire of avoiding needless suffering. I need not tell you I have no intention of suicide at present; but I confess it would be a comfort to me to hold in my possession that golden key to the chamber of perpetual rest. The *Prussic Acid* is used in medicine in infinitely minute doses; but that preparation is weak, and has not the concentration necessary to medicine all ills infallibly. A single drop, even less, is a dose, and it acts by paralysis'.—*Trelawny*, p. 209.

I believe that up to this time he had never travelled without pistols for defence, nor without laudanum as a refuge from intolerable pain. His physical suffering was often very severe; and this last letter must have been written under the anticipation that it might become incurable, and unendurable to a degree from which he wished to be permanently provided with the means of escape. [T. L. P.]



acquiesce in the inevitable transfer of his affections to their new shrine. She did not so acquiesce, and he cut the Gordian knot of the difficulty by leaving England with Miss Godwin on the 28th of July, 1814.

Shortly after this I received a letter from Harriet, wishing to see me. I called on her at her father's house in Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square. She then gave me her own account of the transaction, which, as I have said, decidedly contradicted the supposition of anything like separation by mutual consent.

She at the same time gave me a description, by no means flattering, of Shelley's new love, whom I had not then seen. I said: 'If you have described her correctly, what could he see in her?' 'Nothing,' she said, 'but that her name was Mary, and not only Mary, but Mary Wollstonecraft.'

The lady had nevertheless great personal and intellectual attractions, though it is not to be wondered at that Harriet could not see them.

I feel it due to the memory of Harriet to state my most decided conviction that her conduct as a wife was as pure, as true, as absolutely faultless, as that of any who for such conduct are held most in honour.

Mr. Hogg says: 'Shelley told me his friend Robert Southey once said to him: "A man ought to be able to live with any woman. You see that I can, and so ought you. It comes to pretty much the same thing, I apprehend. There is no great choice or difference"'. *Any woman*, I suspect, must have been said with some qualification. But such an one as either of them had first chosen, Southey saw no reason to change.

Shelley gave me some account of an interview he had had with Southey. It was after his return from his first visit to Switzerland, in the autumn of 1814. I forget whether it was in town or country; but it was in Southey's study, in which was suspended a portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft. Whether Southey had been in love with this lady is more than I know. That he had devotedly admired her is clear from his 'Epistle to Amos Cottle', prefixed to the latter's *Icelandic Poetry* (1797); in which, after describing the scenery of Norway, he says:

Scenes like these

Have almost lived before me, when I gazed  
Upon their fair resemblance traced by him,  
Who sung the banished man of Ardebell;  
Or to the eye of Fancy held by her,  
Who among women left no equal mind  
When from this world she passed; and I could weep  
To think that she is to the grave gone down!

Where a note names Mary Wollstonecraft, the allusion being to her *Letters from Norway*.

Shelley had previously known Southey, and wished to renew or continue friendly relations; but Southey was repulsive. He pointed to the picture, and expressed his bitter regret that the daughter of that angelic woman should have been so misled. It was most probably on this occasion that he made the remark cited by Mr. Hogg: his admiration of Mary Wollstonecraft may have given force to the observation: and as he had known Harriet, he might have thought that, in his view of the matter, she was all that a husband could wish for.

Few are now living who remember Harriet Shelley. I remember her well, and will describe her to the best of my recollection. She had a good figure, light, active, and graceful. Her features were regular and well proportioned. Her hair was light brown, and dressed with taste and simplicity. In her dress she was truly *simplex munditiis*. Her complexion was beautifully transparent; the tint of the blush rose shining through the lily. The tone of her voice was pleasant; her speech the essence of frankness and cordiality; her spirits always cheerful; her laugh spontaneous, hearty, and joyous. She was well educated. She read agreeably and intelligently. She wrote only letters, but she wrote them well. Her manners were good; and her whole aspect and demeanour such manifest emanations of pure and truthful nature, that to be once in her company was to know her thoroughly. She was fond of her husband, and accommodated herself in every way to his tastes. If they mixed in society, she adorned it; if they lived in retirement, she was satisfied; if they travelled, she enjoyed the change of scene.

That Shelley's second wife was intellectually better suited to him than his first, no one who knew them both will deny; and that a man, who lived so totally out of the ordinary world and in a world of ideas, needed such an ever-present sympathy more than the general run of men, must also be admitted; but Southey, who did not want an intellectual wife, and was contented with his own, may well have thought that Shelley had equal reason to seek no change.

After leaving England, in 1814, the newly-affianced lovers took a tour on the Continent. He wrote to me several letters from Switzerland, which were subsequently published, together with a *Six Weeks' Tour*, written in the form of a journal by the lady with whom his fate was thenceforward indissolubly bound. I was introduced to her on their return.

The rest of 1814 they passed chiefly in London. Perhaps this winter in London was the most solitary period of Shelley's life. I often passed an evening with him at his lodgings, and I do not recollect ever meeting any one there excepting Mr. Hogg. Some of his few friends of the preceding year had certainly at that time fallen off from him. At the same time he was short of money, and was trying to raise some on his expectations from 'Jews and their fellow-Christians', as Lord Byron says. One day, as we were walking together on the banks of the Surrey canal, and discoursing of Wordsworth, and quoting some of his verses, Shelley suddenly said to me: 'Do you think Wordsworth could have written such poetry, if he had ever had dealings with money-lenders?' His own example, however, proved that the association had not injured his poetical faculties.

The canal in question was a favourite walk with us. The Croydon Canal branched off from it, and passed very soon into wooded scenery. The Croydon Canal is extinct, and has given place to the, I hope, more useful, but certainly less picturesque, railway. Whether the Surrey exists, I do not know. He had a passion for sailing paper-boats, which he indulged on this canal, and on the Serpentine river. The best spot he had ever found for it was a large pool of transparent water, on a heath above Bracknell, with determined borders free from weeds, which admitted of launching the miniature craft on the windward, and running round to receive it on the leeward side. On the Serpentine he would sometimes launch a boat constructed with more than usual care, and freighted with halfpence. He delighted to do this in the presence of boys, who would run round to meet it, and when it landed in safety, and the boys scrambled for their prize, he had difficulty in restraining himself from shouting as loudly as they did. The river was not suitable to this amusement, nor even Virginia Water, on which he sometimes practised it; but the lake was too large to allow of meeting the landing. I sympathized with him in this taste: I had it before I knew him: I am not sure that I did not originate it with him; for which I should scarcely receive the thanks of my friend, Mr. Hogg, who never took any pleasure in it, and cordially abominated it, when, as frequently happened, on a cold winter day, in a walk from Bishopgate over Bagshot Heath, we came on a pool of water, which Shelley would not part from till he had rigged out a flotilla from any unfortunate letters he happened to have in his pocket. Whatever may be thought of this amusement for grown gentlemen, it was at least innocent amusement,

and not mixed up with any 'sorrow of the meanest thing that feels'.<sup>1</sup>

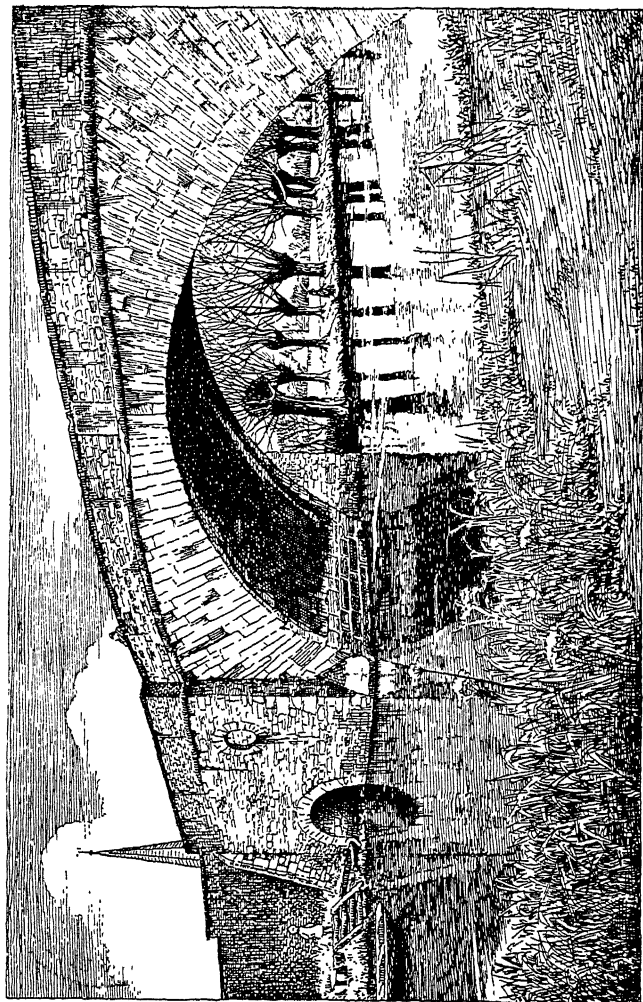
In the summer of 1815 Shelley took a furnished house at Bishopgate, the eastern entrance of Windsor Park, where he resided till the summer of 1816. At this time he had, by the sacrifice of a portion of his expectations, purchased an annuity of £1,000 a year from his father, who had previously allowed him £200.

I was then living at Marlow, and frequently walked over to pass a few days with him. At the end of August 1815 we made an excursion on the Thames to Lechlade, in Gloucestershire, and as much higher as there was water to float our skiff. It was a dry season, and we did not get much beyond Inglesham Weir, which was not then, as now, an immovable structure, but the wreck of a movable weir, which had been subservient to the navigation, when the river had been, as it had long ceased to be, navigable to Cricklade. A solitary sluice was hanging by a chain, swinging in the wind and creaking dismally. Our voyage terminated at a spot where the cattle stood entirely across the stream, with the water scarcely covering their hoofs. We started from, and returned to, Old Windsor, and our excursion occupied about ten days. This was, I think, the origin of Shelley's taste for boating, which he retained to the end of his life. On our way up, at Oxford, he was so much out of order that he feared being obliged to return. He had been living chiefly on tea and bread and butter, drinking occasionally a sort of spurious lemonade, made of some powder in a box, which, as he was reading at the time the *Tale of a Tub*, he called the *powder of pimperlompimp*. He consulted a doctor, who may have done him some good, but it was not apparent. I told him: 'If he would allow me to prescribe for him, I would set him to rights'. He asked: 'What would be your prescription?' I said: 'Three mutton chops, well peppered'. He said: 'Do you really think so?' I said: 'I am sure of it'. He took the prescription; the success was obvious and immediate. He lived in my way for the rest of our expedition, rowed vigorously, was cheerful, merry, overflowing with animal spirits, and had

<sup>1</sup> This lesson, shepherd, let us two divide,  
Taught both by what she [Nature] shows and what conceals,  
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.

Wordsworth, *Hartleap Well*. [T. L. P.]

[Wordsworth wrote 'One lesson', not 'This lesson'.]



THE THAMES AT LECHLADE



certainly one week of thorough enjoyment of life. We passed two nights in a comfortable inn at Lechlade, and his lines: *A Summer Evening on the Thames at Lechlade*, were written then and there. Mrs. Shelley (the second, who always bore his name), who was with us, made a diary of the little trip, which I suppose is lost.

The whole of the winter 1815-16 was passed quietly at Bishopgate. Mr. Hogg often walked down from London; and I, as before, walked over from Marlow. This winter was, as Mr. Hogg expressed it, a mere Atticism. Our studies were exclusively Greek. To the best of my recollection, we were, throughout the whole period, his only visitors. One or two persons called on him; but they were not to his mind, and were not encouraged to reappear. The only exception was a physician whom he had called in; the Quaker, Dr. Pope, of Staines. This worthy old gentleman came more than once, not as a doctor, but a friend. He liked to discuss theology with Shelley. Shelley at first avoided the discussion, saying his opinions would not be to the doctor's taste; but the doctor answered: 'I like to hear thee talk, friend Shelley; I see thee art very deep'.

At this time Shelley wrote his *Alastor*. He was at a loss for a title, and I proposed that which he adopted: *Alastor; or, the Spirit of Solitude*. The Greek word Ἀλάστωρ is an evil genius, κακοδαίμων, though the sense of the two words is somewhat different, as in the Φανείς Ἀλάστωρ ἢ κακὸς δαίμων ποθέν, of Æschylus. The poem treated the spirit of solitude as a spirit of evil. I mention the true meaning of the word because many have supposed *Alastor* to be the name of the hero of the poem.

He published this, with some minor poems, in the course of the winter.

In the early summer of 1816 the spirit of restlessness again came over him, and resulted in a second visit to the Continent. The change of scene was preceded, as more than once before, by a mysterious communication from a person seen only by himself, warning him of immediate personal perils to be incurred by him if he did not instantly depart.

I was alone at Bishopgate, with him and Mrs. Shelley, when the visitation alluded to occurred. About the middle of the day, intending to take a walk, I went into the hall for my hat. His was there, and mine was not. I could not imagine what had become of it; but as I could not walk without it, I returned to the library. After some time had elapsed, Mrs. Shelley came in, and gave me an account which she had just received from

himself, of the visitor and his communication. I expressed some scepticism on the subject, on which she left me, and Shelley came in, with my hat in his hand. He said: 'Mary tells me, you do not believe that I have had a visit from Williams'. I said: 'I told her there were some improbabilities in the narration'. He said: 'You know Williams of Tremadoc?' I said: 'I do'. He said: 'It was he who was here to-day. He came to tell me of a plot laid by my father and uncle, to entrap me and lock me up. He was in great haste, and could not stop a minute, and I walked with him to Egham'. I said: 'What hat did you wear?' He said: 'This, to be sure'. I said: 'I wish you would put it on'. He put it on, and it went over his face. I said: 'You could not have walked to Egham in that hat'. He said: 'I snatched it up hastily, and perhaps I kept it in my hand. I certainly walked with Williams to Egham, and he told me what I have said. You are very sceptical'. I said: 'If you are certain of what you say, my scepticism cannot affect your certainty'. He said: 'It is very hard on a man who has devoted his life to the pursuit of truth, who has made great sacrifices and incurred great sufferings for it, to be treated as a visionary. If I do not know that I saw Williams, how do I know that I see you?' I said: 'An idea may have the force of a sensation; but the oftener a sensation is repeated, the greater is the probability of its origin in reality. You saw me yesterday, and will see me to-morrow'. He said: 'I can see Williams to-morrow if I please. He told me he was stopping at the Turk's Head Coffee-house, in the Strand, and should be there two days. I want to convince you that I am not under a delusion. Will you walk with me to London to-morrow, to see him?' I said: 'I would most willingly do so'. The next morning after an early breakfast we set off on our walk to London. We had got half way down Egham Hill, when he suddenly turned round, and said to me: 'I do not think we shall find Williams at the Turk's Head'. I said: 'Neither do I'. He said: 'You say that, because you do not think he has been there; but he mentioned a contingency under which he might leave town yesterday, and he has probably done so'. I said: 'At any rate, we should know that he has been there'. He said: 'I will take other means of convincing you. I will write to him. Suppose we take a walk through the forest'. We turned about on our new direction, and were out all day. Some days passed, and I heard no more of the matter. One morning he said to me: 'I have some news of Williams; a letter and an enclosure'. I said: 'I shall be glad to see the



letter'. He said: 'I cannot show you the letter; I will show you the enclosure. It is a diamond necklace. I think you know me well enough to be sure I would not throw away my own money on such a thing, and that if I have it, it must have been sent me by somebody else. It has been sent me by Williams'. 'For what purpose?' I asked. He said: 'To prove his identity and his sincerity'. 'Surely,' I said, 'your showing me a diamond necklace will prove nothing but that you have one to show.' 'Then', he said, 'I will not show it you. If you will not believe me, I must submit to your incredulity.' There the matter ended. I never heard another word of Williams, nor of any other mysterious visitor. I had on one or two previous occasions argued with him against similar semi-delusions, and I believe if they had always been received with similar scepticism, they would not have been often repeated; but they were encouraged by the ready credulity with which they were received by many who ought to have known better. I call them semi-delusions, because, for the most part, they had their basis in his firm belief that his father and uncle had designs on his liberty. On this basis his imagination built a fabric of romance, and when he presented it as substantive fact, and it was found to contain more or less of inconsistency, he felt his self-esteem interested in maintaining it by accumulated circumstances, which severally vanished under the touch of investigation, like Williams's location at the Turk's Head Coffee-house.

I must add that, in the expression of these differences, there was not a shadow of anger. They were discussed with freedom and calmness; with the good temper and good feeling which never forsook him in conversations with his friends. There was an evident anxiety for acquiescence, but a quiet and gentle toleration of dissent. A personal discussion, however interesting to himself, was carried on with the same calmness as if it related to the most abstract question in metaphysics.

Indeed, one of the great charms of intercourse with him was the perfect good humour and openness to conviction with which he responded to opinions opposed to his own. I have known eminent men, who were no doubt very instructive as lecturers to people who like being lectured; which I never did; but with whom conversation was impossible. To oppose their dogmas, even to question them, was to throw their temper off its balance. When once this infirmity showed itself in any of my friends, I was always careful not to provoke a second ebullition. I submitted to the preachment, and was glad when it was over.

The result was a second trip to Switzerland. During his absence he wrote me several letters, some of which were subsequently published by Mrs. Shelley; others are still in my possession. Copies of two of these were obtained by Mr. Middleton, who has printed a portion of them. Mrs. Shelley was at that time in the habit of copying Shelley's letters, and these were among some papers accidentally left at Marlow, where they fell into unscrupulous hands. Mr. Middleton must have been aware that he had no right to print them without my consent. I might have stopped his publication by an injunction, but I did not think it worth while, more especially as the book, though abounding with errors adopted from Captain Medwin and others, is written with good feeling towards the memory of Shelley.

During his stay in Switzerland he became acquainted with Lord Byron. They made together an excursion round the lake of Geneva, of which he sent me the detail in a diary. This diary was published by Mrs. Shelley, but without introducing the name of Lord Byron, who is throughout called 'my companion'. The diary was first published during Lord Byron's life; but why his name was concealed I do not know. Though the changes are not many, yet the association of the two names gives it great additional interest.

At the end of August 1816 they returned to England, and Shelley passed the first fortnight of September with me at Marlow. July and August 1816 had been months of perpetual rain. The first fortnight of September was a period of unbroken sunshine. The neighbourhood of Marlow abounds with beautiful walks; the river scenery is also fine. We took every day a long excursion, either on foot or on the water. He took a house there, partly, perhaps principally, for the sake of being near me. While it was being fitted and furnished he resided at Bath.

In December 1816 Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine river, not, as Captain Medwin says, in a pond at the bottom of her father's garden at Bath. Her father had not then left his house in Chapel Street, and to that house his daughter's body was carried.

On 30th December 1816 Shelley married his second wife; and early in the ensuing year they took possession of their house at Marlow. It was a house with many large rooms and extensive gardens. He took it on a lease for twenty-one years, furnished it handsomely, fitted up a library in a room large enough for a ballroom, and settled himself down, as he supposed, for life. This was an agreeable year to all of us. Mr. Hogg was a frequent

visitor. We had a good deal of rowing and sailing, and we took long walks in all directions. He had other visitors from time to time. Amongst them were Mr. Godwin and Mr. and Mrs. Leigh Hunt. He led a much more social life than he had done at Bishopgate; but he held no intercourse with his immediate neighbours. He said to me more than once: 'I am not wretch enough to tolerate an acquaintance'.

In the summer of 1817 he wrote *The Revolt of Islam*, chiefly on a seat on a high prominence in Bisham Wood, where he passed whole mornings with a blank book and a pencil. This work, when completed, was printed under the title of *Laon and Cythna*. In this poem he had carried the expression of his opinions, moral, political, and theological, beyond the bounds of discretion. The terror which, in those days of persecution of the press, the perusal of the book inspired in Mr. Ollier, the publisher, induced him to solicit the alteration of many passages which he had marked. Shelley was for some time inflexible; but Mr. Ollier's refusal to publish the poem as it was, backed by the advice of all his friends, induced him to submit to the required changes. Many leaves were cancelled, and it was finally published as *The Revolt of Islam*. Of *Laon and Cythna* only three copies had gone forth. One of these had found its way to the *Quarterly Review*, and the opportunity was readily seized of pouring out on it one of the most malignant effusions of the *odium theologicum* that ever appeared even in those days, and in that periodical.

During his residence at Marlow we often walked to London, frequently in company with Mr. Hogg. It was our usual way of going there, when not pressed by time. We went by a very pleasant route over fields, lanes, woods, and heaths to Uxbridge, and by the main road from Uxbridge to London. The total distance was thirty-two miles to Tyburn turnpike. We usually stayed two nights, and walked back on the third day. I never saw Shelley tired with these walks. Delicate and fragile as he appeared, he had great muscular strength. We took many walks in all directions from Marlow, and saw everything worth seeing within a radius of sixteen miles. This comprehended, among other notable places, Windsor Castle and Forest, Virginia Water, and the spots which were consecrated by the memories of Cromwell, Hampden, and Milton, in the Chiltern district of Buckinghamshire. We had also many pleasant excursions, rowing and sailing on the river, between Henley and Maidenhead.

Shelley, it has been seen, had two children by his first wife. These children he claimed after Harriet's death, but her family

refused to give them up. They resisted the claim in Chancery, and the decree of Lord Eldon was given against him.

The grounds of Lord Eldon's decision have been misrepresented. The petition had adduced *Queen Mab*, and other instances of Shelley's opinions on religion, as one of the elements of the charges against him; but the judgment ignores this element, and rests entirely upon moral conduct. It was distinctly laid down that the principles which Shelley had professed in regard to some of the most important relations of life, had been carried by him into practice; and that the practical development of those principles, not the principles themselves, had determined the judgment of the Court.

Lord Eldon intimated that his judgment was not final; but nothing would have been gained by an appeal to the House of Peers. Liberal law lords were then unknown; neither could Shelley have hoped to enlist public opinion in his favour. A Scotch marriage, contracted so early in life, might not have been esteemed a very binding tie: but the separation which so closely followed on a marriage in the Church of England, contracted two years and a half later, presented itself as the breach of a much more solemn and deliberate obligation.

It is not surprising that so many persons at the time should have supposed that the judgment had been founded, at least partly, on religious grounds. Shelley himself told me, that Lord Eldon had expressly stated that such grounds were excluded, and the judgment itself showed it. But few read the judgment. It did not appear in the newspapers, and all report of the proceedings was interdicted. Mr. Leigh Hunt accompanied Shelley to the Court of Chancery. Lord Eldon was extremely courteous; but he said blandly, and at the same time determinedly, that a report of the proceedings would be punished as a contempt of Court. The only explanation I have ever been able to give to myself of his motive for this prohibition was, that he was willing to leave the large body of fanatics among his political supporters under delusion as to the grounds of his judgment; and that it was more for his political interest to be stigmatized by Liberals as an inquisitor, than to incur in any degree the imputation of theological liberality from his own persecuting party.

Since writing the above passages I have seen, in the *Morning Post* of November 22nd, the report of a meeting of the Juridical Society, under the presidency of the present Lord Chancellor, in which a learned brother read a paper, proposing to revive the

system of persecution against 'blasphemous libel'; and in the course of his lecture he said: 'The Court of Chancery, on the doctrine *Parens patriae*, deprived the parent of the guardianship of his children when his principles were in antagonism to religion, as in the case of the poet Shelley'. The Attorney-General observed on this: 'With respect to the interference of the Court of Chancery in the case of Shelley's children, there was a great deal of misunderstanding. It was not because their father was an unbeliever in Christianity, but because he violated and refused to acknowledge the ordinary usages of morality'. The last words are rather vague and twaddling, and I suppose are not the *ipsissima verba* of the Attorney-General. The essence and quintessence of Lord Eldon's judgment was this: 'Mr. Shelley long ago published and maintained the doctrine that marriage is a contract binding only during mutual pleasure. He has carried out that doctrine in his own practice; he has done nothing to show that he does not still maintain it; and I consider such practice injurious to the best interests of society'. I am not apologizing for Lord Eldon, nor vindicating his judgment. I am merely explaining it, simply under the wish that those who talk about it should know what it really was.

Some of Shelley's friends have spoken and written of Harriet as if to vindicate him it were necessary to disparage her. They might, I think, be content to rest the explanation of his conduct on the ground on which he rested it himself—that he had found in another the intellectual qualities which constituted his ideality of the partner of his life. But Harriet's untimely fate occasioned him deep agony of mind, which he felt the more because for a long time he kept the feeling to himself. I became acquainted with it in a somewhat singular manner.

I was walking with him one evening in Bisham Wood, and we had been talking, in the usual way, of our ordinary subjects, when he suddenly fell into a gloomy reverie. I tried to rouse him out of it, and made some remarks which I thought might make him laugh at his own abstraction. Suddenly he said to me, still with the same gloomy expression: 'There is one thing to which I have decidedly made up my mind. I will take a great glass of ale every night'. I said, laughingly: 'A very good resolution, as the result of a melancholy musing'. 'Yes,' he said; 'but you do not know why I take it. I shall do it to deaden my feelings: for I see that those who drink ale have none.' The next day he said to me: 'You must have thought me very unreasonable yesterday evening?' I said: 'I did, certainly'.

'Then', he said, 'I will tell you what I would not tell any one else. I was thinking of Harriet.' I told him: 'I had no idea of such a thing: it was so long since he had named her. I had thought he was under the influence of some baseless morbid feeling; but if ever I should see him again in such a state of mind, I would not attempt to disturb it'.

There was not much comedy in Shelley's life; but his antipathy to 'acquaintance' led to incidents of some drollery. Amongst the persons who called on him at Bishopgate, was one whom he tried hard to get rid of, but who forced himself on him in every possible manner. He saw him at a distance one day, as he was walking down Egham Hill, and instantly jumped through a hedge, ran across a field, and laid himself down in a dry ditch. Some men and women, who were haymaking in the field, ran up to see what was the matter, when he said to them: 'Go away, go away: don't you see it's a bailiff?' On which they left him, and he escaped discovery.

After he had settled himself at Marlow, he was in want of a music-master to attend a lady staying in his house, and I inquired for one at Maidenhead. Having found one, I requested that he would call on Mr. Shelley. One morning Shelley rushed into my house in great trepidation, saying: 'Barricade the doors; give orders that you are not at home. Here is —— in the town'. He passed the whole day with me, and we sat in expectation that the knocker or the bell would announce the unwelcome visitor; but the evening fell on the unfulfilled fear. He then ventured home. It turned out that the name of the music-master very nearly resembled in sound the name of the obnoxious gentleman; and when Shelley's man opened the library door and said: 'Mr. ——, sir', Shelley, who caught the name as that of his *Monsieur Tonson*, exclaimed: 'I would just as soon see the devil!' sprang up from his chair, jumped out of the window, ran across the lawn, climbed over the garden-fence, and came round to me by a back-path: when we entrenched ourselves for a day's siege. We often laughed afterwards at the thought of what must have been his man's astonishment at seeing his master, on the announcement of the musician, disappear so instantaneously through the window, with the exclamation: 'I would just as soon see the devil!' and in what way he could explain to the musician that his master was so suddenly 'not at home'.

Shelley, when he did laugh, laughed heartily, the more so as what he considered the perversions of comedy excited not his laughter but his indignation, although such disgusting outrages

on taste and feeling as the burlesques by which the stage is now disgraced had not then been perpetrated. The ludicrous, when it neither offended good feeling, nor perverted moral judgment, necessarily presented itself to him with greater force.

Though his published writings are all serious, yet his letters are not without occasional touches of humour. In one which he wrote to me from Italy, he gave an account of a new acquaintance who had a prodigious nose. 'His nose is something quite Slawkenbergian. It weighs on the imagination to look at it. It is that sort of nose that transforms all the g's its wearer utters into k's. It is a nose once seen never to be forgotten, and which requires the utmost stretch of Christian charity to forgive. I, you know, have a little turn-up nose, H—— has a large hook one; but add them together, square them, cube them, you would have but a faint notion of the nose to which I refer.'

I may observe incidentally, that his account of his own nose corroborates the opinion I have previously expressed of the inadequate likeness of the published portraits of him, in which the nose has no turn-up. It had, in fact, very little; just as much as may be seen in the portrait to which I have referred, in the Florentine Gallery.

The principal employment of the female population in Marlow was lace-making, miserably remunerated. He went continually amongst this unfortunate population, and to the extent of his ability relieved the most pressing cases of distress. He had a list of pensioners, to whom he made a weekly allowance.

Early in 1818 the spirit of restlessness again came over him. He left Marlow and, after a short stay in London, left England in March of that year, never to return.

I saw him for the last time on Tuesday the 10th of March. The evening was a remarkable one, as being that of the first performance of an opera of Rossini in England, and of the first appearance here of Malibran's father, Garcia. He performed Count Almaviva in the *Barbiere di Siviglia*. Fodor was Rosina; Naldi, Figaro; Ambrogetti, Bartolo; and Angrisani, Basilio. I supped with Shelley and his travelling companions after the opera. They departed early the next morning.

Thus two very dissimilar events form one epoch in my memory. In looking back to that long-past time, I call to mind how many friends, Shelley himself included, I saw around me in the old Italian Theatre, who have now all disappeared from the scene. I hope I am not unduly given to be *laudator temporis acti*, yet I cannot but think that the whole arrangement of the opera in

England has changed for the worse. Two acts of opera, a divertissement, and a ballet, seem very ill replaced by four or five acts of opera, with little or no dancing. These, to me, verify the old saying, that 'Too much of one thing is good for nothing'; and the quiet and decorous audiences, of whom Shelley used to say: 'It is delightful to see human beings so civilized', are not agreeably succeeded by the vociferous assemblies, calling and recalling performers to the footlights, and showering down bouquets to the accompaniment of their noisy approbation.

At the time of his going abroad, he had two children by his second wife—William and Clara; and it has been said that the fear of having these taken from him by a decree of the chancellor had some influence on his determination to leave England; but there was no ground for such a fear. No one could be interested in taking them from him; no reason could be alleged for taking them from their mother; the chancellor would not have entertained the question, unless a provision had been secured for the children; and who was to do this? Restlessness and embarrassment were the causes of his determination; and according to the Newtonian doctrine, it is needless to look for more causes than are necessary to explain the phenomena.

These children both died in Italy; Clara, the youngest, in 1818; William, in the following year. The last event he communicated to me in a few lines, dated Rome, June 8th, 1819:

Yesterday, after an illness of only a few days, my little William died. There was no hope from the moment of the attack. You will be kind enough to tell all my friends, so that I need not write to them. It is a great exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.

A little later in the same month he wrote to me again from Livorno:

Our melancholy journey finishes at this town; but we retrace our steps to Florence, where, as I imagine, we shall remain some months. O that I could return to England! How heavy a weight when misfortune is added to exile; and solitude, as if the measure were not full, heaped high on both. O that I could return to England! I hear you say: 'Desire never fails to generate capacity'. Ah! but that ever-present Malthus, necessity, has convinced desire, that even though it generated capacity its offspring must starve.

Again from Livorno; August 1819 (they had changed their design of going to Florence):

I most devoutly wish that I were living near London. I don't think that I shall settle so far off as Richmond, and to inhabit any



intermediate spot on the Thames, would be to expose myself to the river damps. Not to mention that it is not much to my taste. My inclination points to Hampstead; but I don't know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious and ever-beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends? Social enjoyment in some form or other is the Alpha and Omega of existence. All that I see in Italy, and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine, half enclosing the plain, is nothing—it dwindles to smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little perhaps in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour. How we prize what we despised when present! So the ghosts of our dead associations rise and haunt us, in revenge for our having let them starve and abandoned them to perish.

This seems to contrast strangely with a passage in Mrs. Shelley's journal, written after her return to England:

Mine own Shelley! What a horror you had of returning to this miserable country! To be here without you is to be doubly exiled; to be away from Italy is to lose you twice.—*Shelley Memorials*, p. 244

It is probable, however, that as Mrs. Shelley was fond of Italy, he did not wish to disturb her enjoyment of it, by letting her see fully the deep-seated wish to return to his own country, which lay at the bottom of all his feelings.

It is probable also that, after the birth of his last child, he became more reconciled to residing abroad.

In the same year the parents received the best consolation which nature could bestow on them, in the birth of another son, the present Sir Percy, who was born at Florence on the 12th of November, 1819.

Shelley's life in Italy is best traced by his letters. He delighted in the grand aspects of nature; mountains, torrents, forests, and the sea; and in the ruins, which still reflected the greatness of antiquity. He described these scenes with extraordinary power of language, in his letters as well as in his poetry; but in the latter he peopled them with phantoms of virtue and beauty, such as never existed on earth. One of his most striking works in this kind is the *Prometheus Unbound*. He only once descended into the arena of reality, and that was in the tragedy of *The Cenci*.<sup>1</sup> This is unquestionably a work of great dramatic

<sup>1</sup> Horace Smith's estimate of these two works appears to me just: 'I got from Ollier last week a copy of the *Prometheus Unbound*, which is certainly a most original, grand, and occasionally sublime work, evincing in my opinion a higher order of talent than any of your previous productions; and yet, contrary to your own estimation, I must say I prefer *The*

power, but it is as unquestionably not a work for the modern English stage. It would have been a great work in the days of Massinger. He sent it to me to introduce it to Covent Garden Theatre. I did so; but the result was as I expected. It could not be received; though great admiration was expressed of the author's powers, and great hopes of his success with a less repulsive subject. But he could not clip his wings to the littleness of the acting drama; and though he adhered to his purpose of writing for the stage, and chose Charles I for his subject, he did not make much progress in the task. If his life had been prolonged, I still think he would have accomplished something worthy of the best days of theatrical literature. If the gorgeous scenery of his poetry could have been peopled from actual life, if the deep thoughts and strong feelings which he was so capable of expressing, had been accommodated to characters such as have been and may be, however exceptional in the greatness of passion, he would have added his own name to those of the masters of the art. He studied it with unwearied devotion in its higher forms; the Greek tragedians, Shakespeare, and Calderon. Of Calderon, he says, in a letter to me from Leghorn, September 21st, 1819:

C. C.<sup>1</sup> is now with us on his way to Vienna. He has spent a year or more in Spain, where he has learnt Spanish; and I make him read Spanish all day long. It is a most powerful and expressive language, and I have already learnt sufficient to read with great ease their poet Calderon. I have read about twelve of his plays. Some of them certainly deserve to be ranked among the grandest and most perfect productions of the human mind. He excels all modern dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, whom he resembles, however, in the depth of thought and subtlety of imagination of his writings, and in the one rare power of interweaving delicate and powerful comic traits with the most tragic situations, without diminishing their interest. I rank him far above Beaumont and Fletcher.

In a letter to Mr. Gisborne dated November 1820, he says: 'I am bathing myself in the light and odour of the flowery and starry *Autos*. I have read them all more than once'. These were Calderon's religious dramas, being of the same class as

*Cenci*, because it contains a deep and sustained human interest, of which we feel a want in the other. Prometheus himself certainly touches us nearly; but we see very little of him after his liberation; and, though I have no doubt it will be more admired than anything you have written, I question whether it will be so much read as *The Cenci*.—*Shelley Memorials*, p. 145. [T. L. P.] [This letter is dated September 4th, 1820.]

<sup>1</sup> Charles Clairmont.

those which were called *Mysteries* in France and England, but of a far higher order of poetry than the latter ever attained.

The first time Mr. Trelawny saw him, he had a volume of Calderon in his hand. He was translating some passages of the *Magico Prodigioso*.

I arrived late, and hastened to the Tre Palazzi, on the Lung' Arno, where the Shelleys and Williamses lived on different flats under the same roof, as is the custom on the Continent. The Williamses received me in their earnest, cordial manner; we had a great deal to communicate to each other, and were in loud and animated conversation, when I was rather put out by observing in the passage near the open door, opposite to where I sat, a pair of glittering eyes steadily fixed on mine; it was too dark to make out whom they belonged to. With the acuteness of a woman, Mrs. Williams's eyes followed the direction of mine, and going to the doorway, she laughingly said:

'Come in, Shelley; it's only our friend Tre just arrived.'

Swiftly gliding in, blushing like a girl, a tall, thin stripling held out both his hands; and although I could hardly believe, as I looked at his flushed, feminine, and artless face, that it could be the poet, I returned his warm pressure. After the ordinary greetings and courtesies he sat down and listened. I was silent from astonishment: was it possible this wild-looking, beardless boy, could be the veritable monster at war with all the world? — excommunicated by the Fathers of the Church, deprived of his civil rights by the fiat of a grim Lord Chancellor, discarded by every member of his family, and denounced by the rival sages of our literature as a founder of a Satanic school? I would not believe it; it must be a hoax. He was habited like a boy, in a black jacket and trousers, which he seemed to have outgrown, or his tailor, as is the custom, had most shamefully stunted him in his 'sizings'. Mrs. Williams saw my embarrassment, and to relieve me asked Shelley what book he had in his hand? His face brightened, and he answered briskly:

'Calderon's *Magico Prodigioso*; I am translating some passages in it.'

'Oh, read it to us!'

Shoved off from the shore of commonplace incidents that could not interest him, and fairly launched on a theme that did, he instantly became oblivious of everything but the book in his hand. The masterly manner in which he analyzed the genius of the author, his lucid interpretations of the story, and the ease with which he translated into our language the most subtle and imaginative passages of the Spanish poet, were marvellous, as was his command of the two languages. After this touch of his quality, I no longer doubted his identity. A dead silence ensued; looking up, I asked:

'Where is he?'

Mrs. Williams said: 'Who? Shelley? Oh, he comes and goes like a spirit, no one knows when or where'.—*Trelawny*, pp. 171-2.

From this time Mr. Trelawny was a frequent visitor to the Shelleys, and, as will be seen, a true and indefatigable friend.

In the year 1818 Shelley renewed his acquaintance with Lord Byron, and continued in friendly intercourse with him till the time of his death. Till that time his life, from the birth of his son Percy, was passed chiefly in or near Pisa, or on the seashore between Genoa and Leghorn. It was unmarked by any remarkable events, except one or two, one of which appears to me to have been a mere disturbance of imagination. This was a story of his having been knocked down at the post office in Florence, by a man in a military cloak, who had suddenly walked up to him, saying: 'Are you the damned atheist Shelley?' This man was not seen by any one else, nor ever afterwards seen or heard of; though a man answering the description had on the same day left Florence for Genoa, and was followed up without success.

I cannot help classing this incident with the Tan-yr-allt assassination, and other semi-delusions, of which I have already spoken.

Captain Medwin thinks this 'cowardly attack' was prompted by some article in the *Quarterly Review*. The Quarterly Reviewers of that day had many sins to answer for in the way of persecution of genius, whenever it appeared in opposition to their political and theological intolerance; but they were, I am satisfied, as innocent of this 'attack' on Shelley, as they were of the death of Keats. Keats was consumptive, and foredoomed by nature to early death. His was not the spirit 'to let itself be snuffed out by an article'.

With the cessation of his wanderings his beautiful descriptive letters ceased also. The fear of losing their only surviving son predominated over the love of travelling by which both parents were characterized. The last of this kind which was addressed to me was dated Rome, March 23rd, 1819. This was amongst the letters published by Mrs. Shelley. It is preceded by two from Naples—December 22nd, 1818, and January 26th, 1819. There was a third, which is alluded to in the beginning of his letter from Rome: 'I wrote to you the day before our departure from Naples'. When I gave Mrs. Shelley the other letters, I sought in vain for this. I found it, only a few months since, in some other papers, among which it had gone astray.

His serenity was temporarily disturbed by a calumny, which Lord Byron communicated to him. There is no clue to what it was; and I do not understand why it was spoken of at all. A mystery is a riddle, and the charity of the world will always give such a riddle the worst possible solution.

An affray in the streets of Pisa was a more serious and perilous reality. Shelley was riding outside the gates of Pisa with Lord Byron, Mr. Trelawny, and some other Englishmen, when a dragoon dashed through their party in an insolent manner. Lord Byron called him to account. A scuffle ensued, in which the dragoon knocked Shelley off his horse, wounded Captain Hay in the hand, and was dangerously wounded himself by one of Lord Byron's servants. The dragoon recovered; Lord Byron left Pisa; and so ended an affair which might have had very disastrous results.

Under present circumstances the following passage in a letter which he wrote to me from Pisa, dated March 1820, will be read with interest:

I have a motto on a ring in Italian: 'Il buon tempo verrà'. There is a tide both in public and in private affairs which awaits both men and nations.

I have no news from Italy. We live here under a nominal tyranny, administered according to the philosophic laws of Leopold, and the mild opinions which are the fashion here. Tuscany is unlike all the other Italian States in this respect.

Shelley's last residence was a villa on the Bay of Spezzia. Of this villa Mr. Trelawny has given a view.

Amongst the new friends whom he had made to himself in Italy were Captain and Mrs. Williams. To these, both himself and Mrs. Shelley were extremely attached. Captain Williams was fond of boating, and furnished a model for a small sailing vessel, which he persisted in adopting against the protest of the Genoese builder and of their friend Captain Roberts, who superintended her construction. She was called the *Don Juan*. It took two tons of iron ballast to bring her down to her bearings, and even then she was very crank in a breeze. Mr. Trelawny dispatched her from Genoa under the charge of two steady seamen, and a boy named Charles Vivian. Shelley retained the boy and sent back the two sailors. They told Mr. Trelawny that she was a ticklish boat to manage, but had sailed and worked well, and that they had cautioned the gentlemen accordingly.

It is clear from Mr. Trelawny's account of a trip he had with them, that the only good sailor on board was the boy. They contrived to jam the mainsheet and to put the tiller starboard instead of port. 'If there had been a squall,' he said, 'we should have had to swim for it.'

'Not I,' said Shelley; 'I should have gone down with the rest

of the pigs at the bottom of the boat', meaning the iron pig-ballast.

In the meantime, at the instance of Shelley, Lord Byron had concurred in inviting Mr. Leigh Hunt and his family to Italy. They were to co-operate in a new quarterly journal, to which it was expected that the name of Byron would ensure an immediate and extensive circulation. This was the unfortunate *Liberal*, a title furnished by Lord Byron, of which four numbers were subsequently published. It proved a signal failure, for which there were many causes; but I do not think that any name or names could have buoyed it up against the dead weight of its title alone. A literary periodical should have a neutral name, and leave its character to be developed in its progress. A journal might be pre-eminently, on one side or the other, either aristocratical or democratical in its tone; but to call it the 'Aristocrat' or the 'Democrat' would be fatal to it.

Leigh Hunt arrived in Italy with his family on the 14th of June, 1822, in time to see his friend once and no more.

Shelley was at that time writing a poem called the *Triumph of Life*. The composition of this poem, the perpetual presence of the sea, and other causes (among which I do not concur with Lady Shelley in placing the solitude of his seaside residence, for his life there was less solitary than it had almost ever been),

contributed to plunge the mind of Shelley into a state of morbid excitement, the result of which was a tendency to see visions. One night loud cries were heard issuing from the saloon. The Williamses rushed out of their room in alarm; Mrs. Shelley also endeavoured to reach the spot, but fainted at the door. Entering the saloon, the Williamses found Shelley staring horribly into the air, and evidently in a trance. They waked him, and he related that a figure wrapped in a mantle came to his bedside and beckoned him. He must then have risen in his sleep, for he followed the imaginary figure into the saloon, when it lifted the hood of its mantle, ejaculated '*Siete sodisfatto?*'<sup>1</sup> and vanished. The dream is said to have been suggested by an incident occurring in a drama attributed to Calderon.

Another vision appeared to Shelley on the evening of May 6th, when he and Williams were walking together on the terrace. The story is thus recorded by the latter in his diary:

Fine. Some heavy drops of rain fell without a cloud being visible. After tea, while walking with Shelley on the terrace, and observing the effect of moonshine on the waters, he complained of being unusually nervous, and, stopping short, he grasped me

<sup>1</sup> Are you satisfied?

violently by the arm, and stared steadfastly on the white surf that broke upon the beach under our feet. Observing him sensibly affected, I demanded of him if he was in pain; but he only answered by saying: 'There it is again! there!' He recovered after some time, and declared that he saw, as plainly as he then saw me, a naked child (Allegra, who had recently died) rise from the sea, and clasp its hands as if in joy, smiling at him. This was a trance that it required some reasoning and philosophy entirely to wake him from, so forcibly had the vision operated on his mind. Our conversation, which had been at first rather melancholy, led to this, and my confirming his sensations by confessing that I had felt the same, gave greater activity to his ever-wandering and lively imagination.<sup>1</sup>—

On the afternoon of the 8th of July, 1822, after an absence of some days from home, Shelley and Williams set sail from Leghorn for their home on the Gulf of Spezzia. Trelawny watched them from Lord Byron's vessel, the *Bolivar*. The day was hot and calm. Trelawny said to his Genoese mate: 'They will soon have the land breeze'. 'May be', said the mate, 'they<sup>2</sup> will soon have too much breeze. That gaff-topsail is foolish, in a boat with no deck and no sailor on board. Look at those black lines, and the dirty rags hanging under<sup>3</sup> them out of the sky.<sup>4</sup> Look at the smoke on the water. The devil is brewing mischief.' Shelley's boat disappeared in a fog.

Although the sun was obscured by mists, it was oppressively sultry. There was not a breath of air in the harbour. The heaviness of the atmosphere, and an unwonted stillness benumbed my senses. I went down into the cabin and sank into a slumber. I was roused up by a noise overhead and went on deck. The men were getting up a chain cable to let go another anchor. There was a general stir amongst the shipping; shifting berths, getting down yards and masts, veering out cables, hauling in of hawsers, letting go anchors, hailing from the ships and quays, boats scudding<sup>5</sup> rapidly to and fro. It was almost dark, although only half-past six o'clock. The sea was of the colour, and looked as solid and smooth as a sheet of lead, and covered with an oily scum. Gusts of wind swept over without ruffling it, and big drops of rain fell on its surface, rebounding, as if they could not penetrate it. There was a commotion in the air, made up of many threatening sounds, coming upon us from the sea. Fishing craft and coasting vessels under bare poles rushed by us in shoals, running foul of the ships in the harbour. As yet the din and hubbub was that made by men, but their shrill pipings were suddenly silenced by the crashing voice of a thunder-squall that burst right over our heads. For some time no other sounds were to be heard than the thunder, wind, and rain. When the fury of the storm,

<sup>1</sup> *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 191-3.

<sup>2</sup> *Trelawny*: 'she', not 'they'.

<sup>3</sup> *Trelawny*: 'on', not 'under'.

<sup>4</sup> Peacock omits Trelawny's 'they are a warning' after 'sky'.

<sup>5</sup> *Trelawny*: 'sculling', not 'scudding'.

which did not last for more than twenty minutes, had abated, and the horizon was in some degree cleared, I looked to seaward anxiously, in the hope of descrying Shelley's boat amongst the many small craft scattered about. I watched every speck that loomed on the horizon, thinking that they would have borne up on their return to the port, as all the other boats that had gone out in the same direction had done.—*Trelawny*, pp. 215-16.

Mrs. Shelley and Mrs. Williams passed some days in dreadful suspense. Mrs. Shelley, unable to endure it longer, proceeded to Pisa, and rushing into Lord Byron's room with a face of marble, asked passionately: 'Where is my husband?' Lord Byron afterwards said he had never seen anything in dramatic tragedy to equal the terror of Mrs. Shelley's appearance on that day.

At length the worst was known. The bodies of the two friends and the boy were washed on shore. That of the boy was buried in the sand. That of Captain Williams was burned on the 15th of August. The ashes were collected and sent to England for interment. The next day the same ceremony was performed for Shelley; and his remains were collected to be interred, as they subsequently were, in the Protestant cemetery at Rome. Lord Byron and Mr. Leigh Hunt were present on both occasions. Mr. Trelawny conducted all the proceedings, as he had conducted all the previous search. Herein, and in the whole of his subsequent conduct towards Mrs. Shelley, he proved himself, as I have already observed, a true and indefatigable friend. In a letter which she wrote to me, dated Genoa, September 29th, 1822, she said:

Trelawny is the only quite disinterested friend I have here; the only one who clings to the memory of my loved ones as I do myself; but he, alas! is not <sup>1</sup> one of them, though he is really kind and good.

The boat was subsequently recovered; the state in which everything was found in her, showed that she had not capsized. Captain Roberts first thought that she had been swamped by a heavy sea; but on closer examination, finding many of the timbers on the starboard quarter broken, he thought it certain that she must have been run down by a felucca in the squall.

I think the first conjecture the most probable. Her masts were gone, and her bowsprit broken. Mr. Trelawny had previously dispatched two large feluccas with ground-tackling to drag for her. This was done for five or six days. They

<sup>1</sup> In Peacock's longer citation of this letter (p. 462) he prints 'not as one of them'.



succeeded in finding her, but failed in getting her up. The task was accomplished by Captain Roberts. The specified damage to such a fragile craft was more likely to have been done by the dredging apparatus, than by collision with a felucca.

So perished Percy Bysshe Shelley, in the flower of his age, and not perhaps even yet in the full flower of his genius; a genius unsurpassed in the description and imagination of scenes of beauty and grandeur; in the expression of impassioned love of ideal beauty; in the illustration of deep feeling by congenial imagery; and in the infinite variety of harmonious versification. What was, in my opinion, deficient in his poetry was, as I have already said, the want of reality in the characters with which he peopled his splendid scenes, and to which he addressed or imparted the utterance of his impassioned feelings. He was advancing, I think, to the attainment of this reality. It would have given to his poetry the only element of truth which it wanted; though at the same time, the more clear development of what men were would have lowered his estimate of what they might be, and dimmed his enthusiastic prospect of the future destiny of the world. I can conceive him, if he had lived to the present time, passing his days like Volney, looking on the world from his windows without taking part in its turmoils; and perhaps like the same, or some other great apostle of liberty (for I cannot at this moment verify the quotation), desiring that nothing should be inscribed on his tomb, but his name, the dates of his birth and death, and the single word,

‘DÉSILLUSIONNÉ’.

## SUPPLEMENTARY NOTICE

IN *Macmillan's Magazine* for June 1860 there is an article entitled 'Shelley in Pall Mall; by Richard Garnett', which contains the following passage:

Much has been written about Shelley during the last three or four years, and the store of materials for his biography has been augmented by many particulars, some authentic and valuable, others trivial or mythical, or founded on mistakes or misrepresentations. It does not strictly fall within the scope of this paper to notice any of these, but some of the latter class are calculated to modify so injuriously what has hitherto been the prevalent estimate of Shelley's character, and, while entirely unfounded, are yet open to correction from the better knowledge of so few, that it would be inexcusable to omit an opportunity of comment which only chance has presented, and which may not speedily recur. It will be readily perceived that the allusion is to the statements respecting Shelley's separation from his first wife, published by Mr. T. L. Peacock, in *Fraser's Magazine* for January last. According to these, the transaction was not preceded by long-continued unhappiness, neither was it an amicable agreement effected in virtue of a mutual understanding. The time cannot be distant when these assertions must be refuted by the publication of documents hitherto withheld, and Shelley's family have doubted whether it be worth while to anticipate it. Pending their decision, I may be allowed to state most explicitly that the evidence to which they would in such a case appeal, and to the nature of which I feel fully competent to speak, most decidedly contradicts the allegations of Mr. Peacock.

A few facts in the order of time will show, I will not say the extreme improbability, but the absolute impossibility, of Shelley's family being in possession of any such documents as are here alleged to exist.

In August 1811 Shelley married Harriet Westbrook in Scotland.

On the 24th of March, 1814, he married her a second time in the Church of England, according to the marriage certificate printed in my article of January 1860. This second marriage could scarcely have formed an incident in a series of 'long-continued unhappiness'.

In the beginning of April 1814 Shelley and Harriet were together on a visit to Mrs. B.,<sup>1</sup> at Bracknell. This lady and her family were of the few who constituted Shelley's most intimate

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. De Boinville.

friends. On the 18th of April she wrote to Mr. Hogg: 'Shelley is again a widower. His beauteous half went to town on Thursday with Miss Westbrook, who is gone to live, I believe, at Southampton.<sup>1</sup>

Up to this time, therefore, at least, Shelley and Harriet were together; and Mrs. B.'s letter shows that she had no idea of estrangement between them, still less of permanent separation.

I said in my article of January 1860: 'There was no estrangement, no shadow of a thought of separation, till Shelley became acquainted, not long after the second marriage, with the lady who was subsequently his second wife'.

When Shelley first saw this lady she had just returned from a visit to some friends in Scotland; and when Mr. Hogg first saw her she wore 'a frock of tartan, an unusual dress in London at that time'.<sup>1</sup> She could not have been long returned.

Mr. Hogg saw Mary Godwin for the first time on the first day of Lord Cochrane's trial. This was the 8th of June, 1814. He went with Shelley to Mr. Godwin's. 'We entered a room on the first floor. . . . William Godwin was not at home. . . . The door was partially and softly opened. A thrilling voice called "Shelley!" A thrilling voice answered "Mary!" And he darted out of the room like an arrow from the bow of the far-shooting king.'<sup>2</sup>

Shelley's acquaintance with Miss Godwin must, therefore, have begun between the 18th of April and the 8th of June; much nearer, I apprehend, to the latter than the former, but I cannot verify the precise date.

On the 7th of July, 1814 Harriet wrote to a mutual friend, still living, a letter in which 'she expressed a confident belief that he must know where Shelley was, and entreating his assistance to induce him to return home'. She was not even then aware that Shelley had finally left her.

On the 28th of the same month Shelley and Miss Godwin left England for Switzerland.

The interval between the Scotch and English marriages was two years and seven months. The interval between the second marriage and the departure for Switzerland, was four months and four days. In the estimate of probabilities, the space for voluntary separation is reduced by Mrs. B.'s letter of April 18 to three months and thirteen days; and by Harriet's letter of July 7 to twenty-one days. If, therefore, Shelley's family

<sup>1</sup> Hogg's *Life of Shelley*, ii, p. 145. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, p. 148. [T. L. P.]

have any document which demonstrates Harriet's consent to the separation, it must prove the consent to have been given on one of these twenty-one days. I know, by my subsequent conversation with Harriet, of which the substance was given in my article of January 1860, that she was not a consenting party; but as I have only my own evidence to that conversation, Mr. Garnett may choose not to believe me. Still, on other evidence than mine, there remain no more than three weeks within which, if at all, the 'amicable agreement' must have been concluded.

But again, if Shelley's family had any conclusive evidence on the subject, they must have had some clear idea of the date of the separation, and of the circumstances preceding it. That they had not is manifest from Lady Shelley's statement, that 'towards the close of 1813, estrangements, which for some time had been slowly growing between Mr. and Mrs. Shelley, came to a crisis: separation ensued, and she returned to her father's house'.<sup>1</sup> Lady Shelley could not have written thus if she had known the date of the second marriage, or had even adverted to the letter of the 18th of April, 1814, which had been published by Mr. Hogg long before the production of her own volume.

I wrote the preceding note immediately after the appearance of Mr. Garnett's article; but I postponed its publication, in the hope of obtaining copies of the letters which were laid before Lord Eldon in 1817. These were nine letters from Shelley to Harriet, and one from Shelley to Miss Westbrook after Harriet's death. These letters were not filed; but they are thus alluded to in Miss Westbrook's affidavit, dated 10th January 1817, of which I have procured a copy from the Record Office:

Elizabeth Westbrook, of Chapel Street, Grosvenor Square, in the parish of Saint George, Hanover Square, in the county of Middlesex, spinster, maketh oath and saith, that she knows and is well acquainted with the handwriting of Percy Bysshe Shelley, Esquire, one of the defendants in this cause, having frequently seen him write; and this deponent saith that she hath looked upon certain paper writings now produced, and shown to her at the time of swearing this her affidavit, and marked respectively 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9; and this deponent saith that the female mentioned or referred to in the said letters, marked respectively 2, 4, 6, 9, under the name or designation of 'Mary', and in the said other letters by the character or description of the person with whom the said defendant had connected or associated himself, is Mary Godwin, in the pleadings of this cause named, whom the said defendant, Percy Bysshe Shelley, in the lifetime of his said wife, and in or about the middle of the

<sup>1</sup> *Shelley Memorials*, pp. 64-5. [T. L. P.]

year 1814, took to cohabit with him, and hath ever since continued to cohabit, and still doth cohabit with; and this deponent saith that she hath looked upon a certain other paper writing, produced and shown to this deponent now at the time of swearing this her affidavit, and marked 10; and this deponent saith that the same paper writing is of the handwriting of the said defendant, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and was addressed by him to this deponent, since the decease of her said sister, the late wife of the said Percy Bysshe Shelley. And this deponent saith that the person referred to in the said last mentioned letter as *the Lady whose union with the said defendant this deponent might excusably regard as the cause of her Sister's Ruin*, is also the said Mary Godwin.

The rest of the affidavit relates to *Queen Mab*.

The words marked in italics could not possibly have been written by Shelley, if his connection with Miss Godwin had not been formed till after a separation from Harriet by mutual consent.

In a second affidavit, dated 13th January 1817, Miss Westbrook stated in substance the circumstances of the marriage, and that two children were the issue of it; that after the birth of the first child, Eliza Ianthe, and while her sister was pregnant with the second, Charles Bysshe, Percy Bysshe Shelley deserted his said wife, and cohabited with Mary Godwin; and thereupon Harriet returned to the house of her father, with her eldest child, and soon afterwards the youngest child was born there; that the children had always remained under the protection of Harriet's father, and that Harriet herself had resided under the same protection until a short time previous to her death in December 1816. It must be obvious that this statement could not have been made if the letters previously referred to had not borne it out; if, in short, they had not demonstrated, first, that the separation was not by mutual consent; and secondly, that it followed, not preceded, Shelley's first acquaintance with Mary Godwin. The rest of the affidavit related to the provision which Mr. Westbrook had made for the children.

Harriet suffered enough in her life to deserve that her memory should be respected. I have always said to all whom it might concern, that I would defend her, to the best of my ability, against all misrepresentations. Such are not necessary to Shelley's vindication. That is best permitted to rest, as I have already observed, on the grounds on which it was placed by himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Fraser's Magazine*, January 1860, p. 102. [T. L. P.] [See p. 347 of this volume.]

The *Quarterly Review* for October 1861 has an article on Shelley's life and character, written in a tone of great fairness and impartiality, with an evident painstaking to weigh evidence and ascertain truth. There are two passages in the article, on which I wish to offer remarks, with reference solely to matters of fact.

Shelley's hallucinations, though not to be confounded with what is usually called insanity, are certainly not compatible with perfect soundness of mind. They were the result of an excessive sensibility, which, only a little more severely strained, would have overturned reason altogether. It has been said that the horror of his wife's death produced some such effect, and that for a time at least he was actually insane. Lady Shelley says nothing about this, and we have no explicit statement of the fact by any authoritative biographer. But it is not in itself improbable.—p. 323.

It was not so, however. He had at that time taken his house at Marlow, where I was then living. He was residing in Bath, and I was looking after the fitting-up of the house and the laying out of the grounds. I had almost daily letters from him or Mary. He was the first to tell me of Harriet's death, asking whether I thought it would become him to interpose any delay before marrying Mary. I gave him my opinion that, as they were living together, the sooner they legalized their connection the better. He acted on this opinion, and shortly after his marriage he came to me at Marlow. We went together to see the progress of his house and grounds. I recollect a little scene which took place on this occasion. There was on the lawn a very fine old wide-spreading holly. The gardener had cut it up into a bare pole, selling the lop for Christmas decorations. As soon as Shelley saw it, he asked the gardener: 'What had possessed him to ruin that beautiful tree?' The gardener said, he thought he had improved its appearance. Shelley said: 'It is impossible that you can be such a fool'. The culprit stood twiddling his thumbs along the seams of his trousers, receiving a fulminating denunciation, which ended in his peremptory dismissal. A better man was engaged, with several assistants, to make an extensive plantation of shrubs. Shelley stayed with me two or three days. I never saw him more calm and self-possessed. Nothing disturbed his serenity but the unfortunate holly. Subsequently, the feeling for Harriet's death grew into a deep and abiding sorrow: but it was not in the beginning that it was felt most strongly.

It is not merely as a work of art that *The Revolt of Islam* must be

considered. It had made its first appearance under the title of *Laon and Cythna*, but *Laon and Cythna* was still more outspoken as to certain matters than *The Revolt of Islam*, and was almost immediately withdrawn from circulation, to appear with alterations under its present name. There is something not quite worthy of Shelley in this transaction. On the one hand, merely prudential reasons, mere dread of public indignation, ought not to have induced him to conceal opinions which for the interest of humanity he thought it his duty to promulgate. But those who knew most of Shelley will be least inclined to attribute to him such a motive as this. On the other hand, if good feeling induced him to abstain from printing what he knew must be painful to the great majority of his countrymen, the second version should have been suppressed as well as the first.—pp. 314-15.

Shelley was not influenced by either of the motives supposed. Mr. Ollier positively refused to publish the poem as it was, and Shelley had no hope of another publisher. He for a long time refused to alter a line: but his friends finally prevailed on him to submit. Still he could not, or would not, sit down by himself to alter it, and the whole of the alterations were actually made in successive sittings of what I may call a literary committee. He contested the proposed alterations step by step: in the end, sometimes adopting, more frequently modifying, never originating, and always insisting that his poem was spoiled.

## LETTERS OF SHELLEY TO PEACOCK

SHELLEY wrote to me many letters from Italy—scarcely less than fifty. Of these, thirteen were published by Mrs. Shelley, and I now publish seventeen more. These are all I can find, and are perhaps all that contain anything of general interest.

I have from time to time thought of printing these letters, but I have always hesitated between two opposite disinclinations—on the one hand to omit the passages which show my friend's kind feelings towards me, and on the other, to bring myself personally before the public. But as these passages, especially those relating to *Nightmare Abbey* (in which he took to himself the character of Scythrop), are really illustrative of his affectionate, candid, and ingenuous character, I have finally determined not to suppress them.

We were for some time in the habit of numbering our letters. The two first in the following series were numbered 6 and 7, and the third 16. Of the letters preceding No. 6, Mrs. Shelley published four; and of those between Nos. 7 and 16 she published six, leaving a deficiency of three, of which I can give no account. No. 16 was the last numbered letter, so that I have no clue to my subsequent losses.

In his letter to me from Naples, dated January 26th, 1819 (published by Mrs. Shelley), he said: 'In my accounts of pictures and things, I am more pleased to interest you than the many; and this is fortunate, because in the first place I have no idea of attempting the latter, and if I did attempt it, I should assuredly fail. A perception of the beautiful characterizes those who differ from ordinary men, and those who can perceive it would not buy enough to pay the printer. Besides, I keep no journal, and the only records of my voyage will be the letters I send you'.

The letter from Naples, dated February 25th, 1819, is the last I can find unpublished; and that from Rome, June 5th, 1819, published by Mrs. Shelley, was probably the last of his beautiful descriptive letters to me.

Of the cessation of his wanderings, and consequently of his descriptions, I have spoken in my last paper. There is some-



thing to the point in one of the following letters: 'Livorno, June, 1819.—I do not as usual send you an account of my journey, for I had neither the health nor the spirit to take notes'.

. . . . .

[The preceding paragraphs form Peacock's introduction to the sixteen letters, or portions of letters, which he published in *Fraser's Magazine* for March 1860. Letter 27, of which he had already used the more important part in the *Memoirs*, he merely referred to, and did not print; but presumably he counted it as his seventeenth.

It will be noticed that he speaks of a total number of thirty letters, while the present edition contains thirty-four—all that are known to exist. Of the remaining four, two (Nos. 2 and 4) had been published separately by Shelley in 1817, with Mrs. Shelley's *History of a Six Weeks' Tour through France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*; and two more (Nos. 1 and 3) are portions of letters which were also sent to Peacock during Shelley's second visit to Switzerland. These last form the 'some very little original matter, curiously obtained' which Peacock mentions, early in the first part of the *Memoirs*, as figuring in Middleton's *Shelley and his Writings*. How Middleton procured them is explained in the second part of the *Memoirs*, page 344 of this edition. The letters which Peacock speaks of above as having been numbered 6, 7, and 16 in Shelley's correspondence with him, are respectively Nos. 9, 10, and 17 of this edition.]

## LETTER I

HOTEL DE SÉCHERON, GENEVA, May 15th, 1816.

AFTER a journey of ten days, we arrived at Geneva. The journey, like that of life, was variegated with intermingled rain and sunshine, though these many showers were to me, as you know, April showers, quickly passing away, and foretelling the calm brightness of summer.

The journey was in some respects exceedingly delightful, but the prudential considerations arising out of the necessity of preventing delay, and the continual attention to pecuniary disbursements, detract terribly from the pleasure of all travelling schemes.

. . . . .

You live by the shores of a tranquil stream, among low and woody hills. You live in a free country, where you may act without restraint, and possess that which you possess in security; and so long as the name of country and the selfish conceptions it includes shall subsist, England, I am persuaded, is the most free and the most refined.

Perhaps you have chosen wisely, but if I return and follow your example, it will be no subject of regret to me that I have seen other things. Surely there is much of bad and much of good, there is much to disgust and much to elevate, which he cannot have felt or known who has never passed the limits of his native land.

So long as man is such as he now is, the experience of which I speak will never teach him to despise the country of his birth—far otherwise, like Wordsworth, he will never know what love subsists between that and him until absence shall have made its beauty more heartfelt; our poets and our philosophers, our mountains and our lakes, the rural lanes and fields which are so especially our own, are ties which, until I become utterly senseless, can never be broken asunder.

These, and the memory of them, if I never should return, these and the affections of the mind, with which, having been once united, [they] are inseparable, will make the name of England dear to me for ever, even if I should permanently return to it no more.

But I suppose you did not pay the postage of this, expecting nothing but sentimental gossip, and I fear it will be long before I play the tourist properly. I will, however, tell you that to come to Geneva we crossed the Jura branch of the Alps.

The mere difficulties of horses, high bills, postilions, and cheating, lying *aubergistes*, you can easily conceive; fill up that part of the picture according to your own experience, and it cannot fail to resemble.

The mountains of Jura exhibit scenery of wonderful sublimity. Pine forests of impenetrable thickness, and untrodden, nay, inaccessible expanse, spreading on every side. Sometimes, descending, they follow the route into the valleys, clothing the precipitous rocks, and struggling with knotted roots between the most barren clefts. Sometimes the road winds high into the regions of frost, and there these forests become scattered, and loaded with snow.

The trees in these regions are incredibly large, and stand in scattered clumps over the white wilderness. Never was scene

more utterly desolate than that which we passed on the evening of our last day's journey.

The natural silence of that uninhabited desert contrasted strangely with the voices of the people who conducted us, for it was necessary in this part of the mountain to take a number of persons, who should assist the horses to force the chaise through the snow, and prevent it from falling down the precipice.

We are now at Geneva, where, or in the neighbourhood, we shall remain probably until the autumn. I may return in a fortnight or three weeks, to attend to the last exertions which L——<sup>1</sup> is to make for the settlement of my affairs; of course I shall then see you; in the meantime it will interest me to hear all that you have to tell of yourself.

P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER 2

MEILLERIE, CLARENS, CHILLON, VEVAI, LAUSANNE

MONTALEGRE, NEAR COLIGNI, GENEVA, *July 12th*, [1816].

It is nearly a fortnight since I have returned from Vevai. This journey has been on every account delightful, but most especially, because then I first knew the divine beauty of Rousseau's imagination, as it exhibits itself in *Julie*. It is inconceivable what an enchantment the scene itself lends to those delineations, from which its own most touching charm arises. But I will give you an abstract of our voyage, which lasted eight days, and if you have a map of Switzerland, you can follow me.

We left Montalegre at half-past two on the 23rd of June. The lake was calm, and after three hours of rowing we arrived at Hermance, a beautiful little village, containing a ruined tower, built, the villagers say, by Julius Cæsar. There were three other towers similar to it, which the Genevese destroyed for their own fortifications in 1560. We got into the tower by a kind of window. The walls are immensely solid, and the stone of which it is built so hard, that it yet retained the mark of chisels. The boatmen said, that this tower was once three times higher than it is now. There are two staircases in the thickness of the walls, one of which is entirely demolished, and the other half ruined, and only accessible by a ladder. The town itself, now an inconsiderable village inhabited by a few fishermen, was built

<sup>1</sup> Longdill, Shelley's solicitor, I presume. [H. B. F.]

by a queen of Burgundy, and reduced to its present state by the inhabitants of Berne, who burnt and ravaged everything they could find.

Leaving Hermance, we arrived at sunset at the village of Nerni. After looking at our lodgings, which were gloomy and dirty, we walked out by the side of the lake. It was beautiful to see the vast expanse of these purple and misty waters broken by the craggy islets near to its slant and 'beached margin'. There were many fish sporting in the lake, and multitudes were collected close to the rocks to catch the flies which inhabited them.

On returning to the village, we sat on a wall beside the lake, looking at some children who were playing at a game like ninepins. The children here appeared in an extraordinary way deformed and diseased. Most of them were crooked, and with enlarged throats; but one little boy had such exquisite grace in his mien and motions, as I never before saw equalled in a child. His countenance was beautiful for the expression with which it overflowed. There was a mixture of pride and gentleness in his eyes and lips, the indications of sensibility, which his education will probably pervert to misery or seduce to crime; but there was more of gentleness than of pride, and it seemed that the pride was tamed from its original wildness by the habitual exercise of milder feelings. My companion gave him a piece of money, which he took without speaking, with a sweet smile of easy thankfulness, and then with an unembarrassed air turned to his play. All this might scarcely be; but the imagination surely could not forbear to breathe into the most inanimate forms, some likeness of its own visions, on such a serene and glowing evening, in this remote and romantic village, beside the calm lake that bore us hither.

On returning to our inn, we found that the servant had arranged our rooms, and deprived them of the greater portion of their former disconsolate appearance. They reminded my companion of Greece: it was five years, he said, since he had slept in such beds. The influence of the recollections excited by this circumstance on our conversation gradually faded, and I retired to rest with no unpleasant sensations, thinking of our journey to-morrow, and of the pleasure of recounting the little adventures of it when we return.

The next morning we passed Yvoire, a scattered village with an ancient castle, whose houses are interspersed with trees, and which stands at a little distance from Nerni, on the promontory

which bounds a deep bay, some miles in extent. So soon as we arrived at this promontory, the lake began to assume an aspect of wilder magnificence. The mountains of Savoy, whose summits were bright with snow, descended in broken slopes to the lake: on high, the rocks were dark with pine forests, which become deeper and more immense, until the ice and snow mingle with the points of naked rock that pierce the blue air; but below, groves of walnut, chestnut, and oak, with openings of lawn fields, attested the milder climate.

As soon as we had passed the opposite promontory, we saw the river Drance, which descends from between a chasm in the mountains, and makes a plain near the lake, intersected by its divided streams. Thousands of *besolets*, beautiful water-birds, like sea-gulls, but smaller, with purple on their backs, take their station on the shallows where its waters mingle with the lake. As we approached Evian, the mountains descended more precipitously to the lake, and masses of intermingled wood and rock overhung its shining spire.

We arrived at this town about seven o'clock, after a day which involved more rapid changes of atmosphere than I ever recollect to have observed before. The morning was cold and wet; then an easterly wind, and the clouds hard and high; then thunder showers, and wind shifting to every quarter; then a warm blast from the south, and summer clouds hanging over the peaks, with bright blue sky between. About half an hour after we had arrived at Evian, a few flashes of lightning came from a dark cloud, directly overhead, and continued after the cloud had dispersed. '*Diespiter per pura tonantes egit equos*': a phenomenon which certainly had no influence on me, corresponding with that which it produced on Horace.

The appearance of the inhabitants of Evian is more wretched, diseased and poor, than I ever recollect to have seen. The contrast indeed between the subjects of the King of Sardinia and the citizens of the independent republics of Switzerland, affords a powerful illustration of the blighting mischiefs of despotism, within the space of a few miles. They have mineral waters here, *eaux savonneuses*, they call them. In the evening we had some difficulty about our passports, but so soon as the syndic heard my companion's rank and name, he apologized for the circumstance. The inn was good. During our voyage, on the distant height of a hill, covered with pine-forests, we saw a ruined castle, which reminded me of those on the Rhine.

We left Evian on the following morning, with a wind of such

violence as to permit but one sail to be carried. The waves also were exceedingly high, and our boat so heavily laden, that there appeared to be some danger. We arrived, however, safe at Meillerie, after passing with great speed mighty forests which overhung the lake, and lawns of exquisite verdure, and mountains with bare and icy points, which rose immediately from the summit of the rocks, whose bases were echoing to the waves.

We here heard that the Empress Maria Louisa had slept at Meillerie—before the present inn was built, and when the accommodations were those of the most wretched village—in remembrance of St. Preux. How beautiful it is to find that the common sentiments of human nature can attach themselves to those who are the most removed from its duties and its enjoyments, when Genius pleads for their admission at the gate of Power. To own them was becoming in the Empress, and confirms the affectionate praise contained in the regret of a great and enlightened nation. A Bourbon dared not even to have remembered Rousseau. She owed this power to that democracy which her husband's dynasty outraged, and of which it was, however, in some sort, the representative among the nations of the earth. This little incident shows at once how unfit and how impossible it is for the ancient system of opinions, or for any power built upon a conspiracy to revive them, permanently to subsist among mankind. We dined there, and had some honey, the best I have ever tasted, the very essence of the mountain flowers, and as fragrant. Probably the village derives its name from this production. Meillerie is the well-known scene of St. Preux's visionary exile; but Meillerie is indeed enchanted ground, were Rousseau no magician. Groves of pine, chestnut, and walnut overshadow it; magnificent and unbounded forests to which England affords no parallel. In the midst of these woods are dells of lawny expanse, inconceivably verdant, adorned with a thousand of the rarest flowers, and odorous with thyme.

The lake appeared somewhat calmer as we left Meillerie, sailing close to the banks, whose magnificence augmented with the turn of every promontory. But we congratulated ourselves too soon: the wind gradually increased in violence, until it blew tremendously; and, as it came from the remotest extremity of the lake, produced waves of a frightful height, and covered the whole surface with a chaos of foam. One of our boatmen, who was a dreadfully stupid fellow, persisted in holding the sail at a time when the boat was on the point of being driven under water

by the hurricane. On discovering his error, he let it entirely go, and the boat for a moment refused to obey the helm; in addition, the rudder was so broken as to render the management of it very difficult; one wave fell in, and then another. My companion, an excellent swimmer, took off his coat, I did the same, and we sat with our arms crossed, every instant expecting to be swamped. The sail was, however, again held, the boat obeyed the helm, and still in imminent peril from the immensity of the waves, we arrived in a few minutes at a sheltered port, in the village of St. Gingoux.

I felt in this near prospect of death a mixture of sensations, among which terror entered, though but subordinately. My feelings would have been less painful had I been alone; but I knew that my companion would have attempted to save me, and I was overcome with humiliation, when I thought that his life might have been risked to preserve mine. When we arrived at St. Gingoux, the inhabitants, who stood on the shore, unaccustomed to see a vessel as frail as ours, and fearing to venture at all on such a sea, exchanged looks of wonder and congratulation with our boatmen, who, as well as ourselves, were well pleased to set foot on shore.

St. Gingoux is even more beautiful than Meillerie; the mountains are higher, and their loftiest points of elevation descend more abruptly to the lake. On high, the aerial summits still cherish great depths of snow in their ravines, and in the paths of their unseen torrents. One of the highest of these is called Roche de St. Julien, beneath whose pinnacles the forests become deeper and more extensive; the chestnut gives a peculiarity to the scene, which is most beautiful, and will make a picture in my memory, distinct from all other mountain scenes which I have ever before visited.

As we arrived here early, we took a *voiture* to visit the mouth of the Rhone. We went between the mountains and the lake, under groves of mighty chestnut trees, beside perpetual streams, which are nourished by the snows above, and form stalactites on the rocks, over which they fall. We saw an immense chestnut tree, which had been overthrown by the hurricane of the morning. The place where the Rhone joins the lake was marked by a line of tremendous breakers; the river is as rapid as when it leaves the lake, but is muddy and dark. We went about a league farther on the road to La Valais, and stopped at a castle called La Tour de Bouverie, which seems to be the frontier of Switzerland and Savoy, as we were asked for our passports, on the supposition of our proceeding to Italy.

On one side of the road was the immense Roche de St. Julien, which overhung it; through the gateway of the castle we saw the snowy mountains of La Valais, clothed in clouds, and, on the other side, was the willowy plain of the Rhone, in a character of striking contrast with the rest of the scene, bounded by the dark mountains that overhang Clarens, Vevai, and the lake that rolls between. In the midst of the plain rises a little isolated hill, on which the white spire of a church peeps from among the tufted chestnut woods. We returned to St. Gingoux before sunset, and I passed the evening in reading *Julie*.

As my companion rises late, I had time before breakfast, on the ensuing morning, to hunt the waterfalls of the river that fall into the lake at St. Gingoux. The stream is indeed, from the declivity over which it falls, only a succession of waterfalls, which roar over the rocks with a perpetual sound, and suspend their unceasing spray on the leaves and flowers that overhang and adorn its savage banks. The path that conducted along this river sometimes avoided the precipices of its shores, by leading through meadows; sometimes threaded the base of the perpendicular and caverned rocks. I gathered in these meadows a nosegay of such flowers as I never saw in England, and which I thought more beautiful for that rarity.

On my return, after breakfast, we sailed for Clarens, determining first to see the three mouths of the Rhone, and then the Castle of Chillon; the day was fine, and the water calm. We passed from the blue waters of the lake over the stream of the Rhone, which is rapid even at a great distance from its confluence with the lake; the turbid waters mixed with those of the lake, but mixed with them unwillingly. (See *Nouvelle Héloïse, Lettre 17, Part. 4.*) I read *Julie* all day; an overflowing, as it now seems, surrounded by the scenes which it has so wonderfully peopled, of sublimest genius, and more than human sensibility. Meillerie, the Castle of Chillon, Clarens, the mountains of La Valais and Savoy, present themselves to the imagination as monuments of things that were once familiar, and of beings that were once dear to it. They were created indeed by one mind, but a mind so powerfully bright as to cast a shade of falsehood on the records that are called reality.

We passed on to the Castle of Chillon, and visited its dungeons and towers. These prisons are excavated below the lake; the principal dungeon is supported by seven columns, whose branching capitals support the roof. Close to the very walls, the lake is eight hundred feet deep; iron rings are fastened to these



columns, and on them were engraven a multitude of names, partly those of visitors, and partly doubtless of the prisoners, of whom now no memory remains, and who thus beguiled a solitude which they have long ceased to feel. One date was as ancient as 1670. At the commencement of the Reformation, and indeed long after that period, this dungeon was the receptacle of those who shook, or who denied the system of idolatry, from the effects of which mankind is even now slowly emerging.

Close to this long and lofty dungeon was a narrow cell, and beyond it one larger and far more lofty and dark, supported upon two unornamented arches. Across one of these arches was a beam, now black and rotten, on which prisoners were hung in secret. I never saw a monument more terrible of that cold and inhuman tyranny, which it has been the delight of man to exercise over man. It was indeed one of those many tremendous fulfilments which render the '*perniciis humani generis*' of the great Tacitus so solemn and irrefragable a prophecy. The gendarme, who conducted us over this castle, told us that there was an opening to the lake, by means of a secret spring, connected with which the whole dungeon might be filled with water before the prisoners could possibly escape!

We proceeded with a contrary wind to Clarens against a heavy swell. I never felt more strongly than on landing at Clarens, that the spirit of old times had deserted its once cherished habitation. A thousand times, thought I, have Julia and St. Preux walked on this terraced road, looking towards these mountains which I now behold; nay, treading on the ground where I now tread. From the window of our lodging our landlady pointed out '*le bosquet de Julie*'. At least the inhabitants of this village are impressed with an idea, that the persons of that romance had actual existence. In the evening we walked thither. It is, indeed, Julia's wood. The hay was making under the trees; the trees themselves were aged, but vigorous, and interspersed with younger ones, which are destined to be their successors, and in future years, when we are dead, to afford a shade to future worshippers of nature, who love the memory of that tenderness and peace of which this was the imaginary abode. We walked forward among the vineyards, whose narrow terraces overlook this affecting scene. Why did the cold maxims of the world compel me at this moment to repress the tears of melancholy transport which it would have been so sweet to indulge, immeasurably, even until the darkness of night had swallowed up the objects which excited them.

I forgot to remark, what indeed my companion remarked to me, that our danger from the storm took place precisely in the spot where Julie and her lover were nearly overset, and where St. Preux was tempted to plunge with her into the lake.

On the following day we went to see the castle of Clarens, a square strong house, with very few windows, surrounded by a double terrace that overlooks the valley, or rather the plain of Clarens. The road which conducted to it wound up the steep ascent through woods of walnut and chestnut. We gathered roses on the terrace, in the feeling that they might be the posterity of some planted by Julie's hand. We sent their dead and withered leaves to the absent.

We went again to 'le bosquet de Julie', and found that the precise spot was now utterly obliterated, and a heap of stones marked the place where the little chapel had once stood. Whilst we were execrating the author of this brutal folly, our guide informed us that the land belonged to the convent of St. Bernard, and that this outrage had been committed by their orders. I knew before, that if avarice could harden the hearts of men, a system of prescriptive religion has an influence far more inimical to natural sensibility. I know that an isolated man is sometimes restrained by shame from outraging the venerable feelings arising out of the memory of genius, which once made nature even lovelier than itself; but associated man holds it as the very sacrament of his union to forswear all delicacy, all benevolence, all remorse; all that is true, or tender, or sublime.

We sailed from Clarens to Vevai. Vevai is a town more beautiful in its simplicity than any I have ever seen. Its market-place, a spacious square interspersed with trees, looks directly upon the mountains of Savoy and La Valais, the lake, and the valley of the Rhone. It was at Vevai that Rousseau conceived the design of Julie.

From Vevai we came to Ouchy, a village near Lausanne. The coasts of the Pays de Vaud, though full of villages and vineyards, present an aspect of tranquillity and peculiar beauty which well compensates for the solitude which I am accustomed to admire. The hills are very high and rocky, crowned and interspersed with woods. Waterfalls echo from the cliffs, and shine afar. In one place we saw the traces of two rocks of immense size, which had fallen from the mountain behind. One of these lodged in a room where a young woman was sleeping, without injuring her. The vineyards were utterly destroyed in its path, and the earth torn up.

The rain detained us two days at Ouchy. We, however, visited Lausanne, and saw Gibbon's house. We were shown the decayed summer-house where he finished his History, and the old acacias on the terrace, from which he saw Mont Blanc, after having written the last sentence. There is something grand and even touching in the regret which he expresses at the completion of his task. It was conceived amid the ruins of the Capitol. The sudden departure of his cherished and accustomed toil must have left him, like the death of a dear friend, sad and solitary.

My companion gathered some acacia leaves to preserve in remembrance of him. I refrained from doing so, fearing to outrage the greater and more sacred name of Rousseau; the contemplation of whose imperishable creations had left no vacancy in my heart for mortal things. Gibbon had a cold and unimpassioned spirit. I never felt more inclination to rail at the prejudices which cling to such a thing, than now that Julie and Clarens, Lausanne and the Roman Empire, compelled me to a contrast between Rousseau and Gibbon.

When we returned, in the only interval of sunshine during the day, I walked on the pier which the lake was lashing with its waves. A rainbow spanned the lake, or rather rested one extremity of its arch upon the water, and the other at the foot of the mountains of Savoy. Some white houses, I know not if they were those of Meillerie, shone through the yellow fire.

On Saturday the 30th of June we quitted Ouchy, and after two days of pleasant sailing arrived on Sunday evening at Montalegre.

### LETTER 3

GENEVA, *July 17th*, 1816.

My opinion of turning to one spot of earth and calling it our home, and of the excellencies and usefulness of the sentiments arising out of this attachment, has at length produced in me the resolution of acquiring this possession.

You are the only man who has sufficient regard for me to take an interest in the fulfilment of this design, and whose tastes conform sufficiently to mine to engage me to confide the execution of it to your discretion.

I do not trouble you with apologies for giving you this commission. I require only rural exertions, walks, and circuitous wanderings, some slight negotiations about the letting of a

house—the superintendence of a disorderly garden, some palings to be mended, some books to be removed and set up.

I wish you would get all my books and all my furniture from Bishopgate, and all other effects appertaining to me. I have written to . . . to secure all that belongs to me there to you. I have written also to L—— to give up possession of the house on the third of August.

When you have possessed yourself of all my affairs, I wish you to look out for a home for me and Mary and William, and the kitten, who is now *en pension*. I wish you to get an unfurnished house, with as good a garden as may be, near Windsor Forest, and take a lease of it for fourteen or twenty-one years. The house must not be too small. I wish the situation to resemble as nearly as possible that of Bishopgate, and should think that Sunning Hill, or Winkfield Plain, or the neighbourhood of Virginia Water would afford some possibilities.

Houses are now exceedingly cheap and plentiful; but I entrust the whole of this affair entirely to your own discretion.

I shall hear from you of course, as to what you have done on this subject, and shall not delay to remit you whatever expenses you may find it necessary to incur. Perhaps, however, you had better sell the useless part of the Bishopgate furniture—I mean those odious curtains, etc.

Will you write to L—— to tell him that you are authorized on my part to go over the inventory with Lady L——'s people on the third of August, if they please, and to make whatever arrangements may be requisite. I should be content with the Bishopgate house, dear as it is, if Lady L—— would make the sale of it a post obit transaction. I merely suggest this, that if you see any possibility of proposing such an arrangement with effect, you might do it.

My present intention is to return to England, and to make that most excellent of nations my perpetual resting place. I think it is extremely probable that we shall return next spring—perhaps before, perhaps after, but certainly we shall return.

On the motives and on the consequences of this journey, I reserve much explanation for some future winter walk or summer expedition. This much alone is certain, that before we return we shall have seen, and felt, and heard, a multiplicity of things which will haunt our talk and make us a little better worth knowing than we were before our departure.

If possible, we think of descending the Danube in a boat, of visiting Constantinople and Athens, then Rome and the Tuscan

cities, and returning by the south of France, always following great rivers. The Danube, the Po, the Rhone, and the Garonne; rivers are not like roads, the work of the hands of man; they imitate mind, which wanders at will over pathless deserts, and flows through nature's loveliest recesses, which are inaccessible to anything besides. They have the viler advantage also of affording a cheaper mode of conveyance.

This eastern scheme is one which has just seized on our imaginations. I fear that the detail of execution will destroy it, as all other wild and beautiful visions; but at all events you will hear from us wherever we are, and to whatever adventures destiny enforces us.

Tell me in return all English news. What has become of my poem? <sup>1</sup> I hope it has already sheltered itself in the bosom of its mother, Oblivion, from whose embraces no one could have been so barbarous as to tear it except me.

Tell me of the political state of England. Its literature, of which when I speak Coleridge is in my thoughts;—yourself, lastly your own employments, your historical labours.

I had written thus far when your letter to Mary dated the 8th arrived. What you say of Bishopgate of course modifies that part of this letter which relates to it. I confess I did not learn the destined ruin without some pain, but it is well for me perhaps that a situation requiring so large an expense should be placed beyond our hopes.

You must shelter my roofless Penates, dedicate some new temple to them, and perform the functions of a priest in my absence. They are innocent deities, and their worship neither sanguinary nor absurd.

Leave Mammon and Jehovah to those who delight in wickedness and slavery—their altars are stained with blood, or polluted with gold, the price of blood. But the shrines of the Penates are good wood fires, or window frames intertwined with creeping plants; their hymns are the purring of kittens, the hissing of kettles; the long talks over the past and dead, the laugh of children; the warm wind of summer filling the quiet house, and the pelting storm of winter struggling in vain for entrance. In talking of the Penates, will you not liken me to Julius Cæsar dedicating a temple to Liberty?

As I have said in the former part of my letter, I trust entirely to your discretion on the subject of a house. Certainly the Forest engages my preference, because of the sylvan nature of

<sup>1</sup> Presumably *Alastor*. [H. B. F.]

the place, and the beasts with which it is filled. But I am not insensible to the beauties of the Thames, and any extraordinary eligibility of situation you mention in your letter would overbalance our habitual affection for the neighbourhood of Bishopgate.

Its proximity to the spot you have chosen is an argument with us in favour of the Thames. Recollect, however, we are now choosing a fixed, settled, eternal home, and as such its internal qualities will affect us more constantly than those which consist in the surrounding scenery, which whatever it may be at first, will shortly be no more than the colours with which our own habits shall invest it.

I am glad that circumstances do not permit the choice to be my own. I shall abide by yours as others abide by the necessity of their birth.

P. B. S.

#### LETTER 4

ST. MARTIN, SERVOZ, CHAMOUNI, MONTANVERT, MONT BLANC

HÔTEL DE LONDRES, CHAMOUNI, *July 22nd*, 1816.

WHILST you, my friend, are engaged in securing a home for us, we are wandering in search of recollections to embellish it. I do not err in conceiving that you are interested in details of all that is majestic or beautiful in nature; but how shall I describe to you the scenes by which I am now surrounded? To exhaust the epithets which express the astonishment and the admiration—the very excess of satisfied astonishment, where expectation scarcely acknowledged any boundary, is this to impress upon your mind the images which fill mine now, even till it overflow? I too have read the raptures of travellers; I will be warned by their example; I will simply detail to you all that I can relate, or all that, if related, would enable you to conceive of what we have done or seen since the morning of the 20th, when we left Geneva.

We commenced our intended journey to Chamouni at half-past eight in the morning. We passed through the champain country, which extends from Mont Salève to the base of the higher Alps. The country is sufficiently fertile, covered with cornfields and orchards, and intersected by sudden acclivities with flat summits. The day was cloudless and excessively hot, the Alps were

perpetually in sight, and as we advanced, the mountains, which form their outskirts, closed in around us. We passed a bridge over a stream, which discharges itself into the Arve. The Arve itself, much swollen by the rains, flows constantly to the right of the road.

As we approached Bonneville through an avenue composed of a beautiful species of drooping poplar, we observed that the cornfields on each side were covered with inundation. Bonneville is a neat little town, with no conspicuous peculiarity, except the white towers of the prison, an extensive building overlooking the town. At Bonneville the Alps commence, one of which, clothed by forests, rises almost immediately from the opposite bank of the Arve.

From Bonneville to Cluses the road conducts through a spacious and fertile plain, surrounded on all sides by mountains, covered like those of Meillerie with forests of intermingled pine and chestnut. At Cluses the road turns suddenly to the right, following the Arve along the chasm, which it seems to have hollowed for itself among the perpendicular mountains. The scene assumes here a more savage and colossal character: the valley becomes narrow, affording no more space than is sufficient for the river and the road. The pines descend to the banks, imitating, with their irregular spires, the pyramidal crags, which lift themselves far above the regions of forest into the deep azure of the sky, and among the white dazzling clouds. The scene, at the distance of half a mile from Cluses, differs from that of Matlock in little else than in the immensity of its proportions, and in its untameable inaccessible solitude, inhabited only by the goats which we saw browsing on the rocks.

Near Maglans, within a league of each other, we saw two waterfalls. They were no more than mountain rivulets, but the height from which they fell, at least of *twelve* hundred feet, made them assume a character inconsistent with the smallness of their stream. The first fell from the overhanging brow of a black precipice on an enormous rock, precisely resembling some colossal Egyptian statue of a female deity. It struck the head of the visionary image, and gracefully dividing there, fell from it in folds of foam more like to cloud than water, imitating a veil of the most exquisite woof. It then united, concealing the lower part of the statue, and hiding itself in a winding of its channel, burst into a deeper fall, and crossed our route in its path towards the Arve.

The other waterfall was more continuous and larger. The

violence with which it fell made it look more like some shape which an exhalation had assumed, than like water, for it streamed beyond the mountain, which appeared dark behind it, as it might have appeared behind an evanescent cloud.

The character of the scenery continued the same until we arrived at St. Martin (called in the maps Sallanches), the mountains perpetually becoming more elevated, exhibiting at every turn of the road more craggy summits, loftier and wider extent of forests, darker and more deep recesses.

The following morning we proceeded from St. Martin, on mules, to Chamouni, accompanied by two guides. We proceeded, as we had done the preceding day, along the valley of the Arve, a valley surrounded on all sides by immense mountains, whose rugged precipices are intermixed on high with dazzling snow. Their bases were still covered with the eternal forests, which perpetually grew darker and more profound as we approached the inner regions of the mountains.

On arriving at a small village at the distance of a league from St. Martin, we dismounted from our mules, and were conducted by our guides to view a cascade. We beheld an immense body of water fall two hundred and fifty feet, dashing from rock to rock, and casting a spray which formed a mist around it, in the midst of which hung a multitude of sunbows, which faded or became unspeakably vivid, as the inconstant sun shone through the clouds. When we approached near to it, the rain of the spray reached us, and our clothes were wetted by the quick-falling but minute particles of water. The cataract fell from above into a deep craggy chasm at our feet, where, changing its character to that of a mountain stream, it pursued its course towards the Arve, roaring over the rocks that impeded its progress.

As we proceeded, our route still lay through the valley, or rather, as it had now become, the vast ravine, which is at once the couch and the creation of the terrible Arve. We ascended, winding between mountains, whose immensity staggers the imagination. We crossed the path of a torrent, which three days since had descended from the thawing snow, and torn the road away.

We dined at Servoz, a little village, where there are lead and copper mines, and where we saw a cabinet of natural curiosities, like those of Keswick and Bethgelert. We saw in this cabinet some 'chamois' horns, and the horns of an exceedingly rare animal called the bouquetin, which inhabits the deserts of snow



to the south of Mont Blanc: it is an animal of the stag kind; its horns weigh, at least, twenty-seven English pounds. It is inconceivable how so small an animal could support so inordinate a weight. The horns are of a very peculiar conformation, being broad, massy, and pointed at the ends, and surrounded with a number of rings, which are supposed to afford an indication of its age: there were seventeen rings on the largest of these horns.

From Servoz three leagues remain to Chamouni. Mont Blanc was before us—the Alps, with their innumerable glaciers on high all around, closing in the complicated windings of the single vale—forests inexpressibly beautiful, but majestic in their beauty—intermingled beech and pine, and oak, overshadowed our road, or receded, whilst lawns of such verdure as I have never seen before, occupied these openings, and gradually became darker in their recesses. Mont Blanc was before us, but it was covered with cloud; its base, furrowed with dreadful gaps, was seen above. Pinnacles of snow intolerably bright, part of the chain connected with Mont Blanc, shone through the clouds at intervals on high. I never knew—I never imagined—what mountains were before. The immensity of these aerial summits excited, when they suddenly burst upon the sight, a sentiment of ecstatic wonder, not unallied to madness. And remember this was all one scene, it all pressed home to our regard and our imagination. Though it embraced a vast extent of space, the snowy pyramids which shot into the bright blue sky seemed to overhang our path; the ravine, clothed with gigantic pines, and black with its depth below, so deep that the very roaring of the untameable Arve, which rolled through it, could not be heard above—all was as much our own, as if we had been the creators of such impressions in the minds of others as now occupied our own. Nature was the poet, whose harmony held our spirits more breathless than that of the divinest.

As we entered the valley of Chamouni (which, in fact, may be considered as a continuation of those which we have followed from Bonneville and Cluses), clouds hung upon the mountains at the distance perhaps of 6,000 feet from the earth, but so as effectually to conceal, not only Mont Blanc, but the other *aiguilles*, as they call them here, attached and subordinate to it. We were travelling along the valley, when suddenly we heard a sound as of the burst of smothered thunder rolling above; yet there was something earthly in the sound, that told us it could not be thunder. Our guide hastily pointed out to us a part of

the mountain opposite, from whence the sound came. It was an avalanche. We saw the smoke of its path among the rocks, and continued to hear at intervals the bursting of its fall. It fell on the bed of a torrent, which it displaced, and presently we saw its tawny-coloured waters also spread themselves over the ravine, which was their couch.

We did not, as we intended, visit the *Glacier des Bossons* to-day, although it descends within a few minutes' walk of the road, wishing to survey it at least when unfatigued. We saw this glacier, which comes close to the fertile plain, as we passed. Its surface was broken into a thousand unaccountable figures; conical and pyramidal crystallizations, more than fifty feet in height, rise from its surface, and precipices of ice, of dazzling splendour, overhang the woods and meadows of the vale. This glacier winds upwards from the valley, until it joins the masses of frost from which it was produced above, winding through its own ravine like a bright belt flung over the black region of pines. There is more in all these scenes than mere magnitude of proportion: there is a majesty of outline; there is an awful grace in the very colours which invest these wonderful shapes—a charm which is peculiar to them, quite distinct even from the reality of their unutterable greatness.

July 24.

Yesterday morning we went to the source of the Arveiron. It is about a league from this village; the river rolls forth impetuously from an arch of ice, and spreads itself in many streams over a vast space of the valley, ravaged and laid bare by its inundations. The glacier by which its waters are nourished, overhangs this cavern and the plain, and the forests of pine which surround it, with terrible precipices of solid ice. On the other side rises the immense glacier of Montanvert, fifty miles in extent, occupying a chasm among mountains of inconceivable height, and of forms so pointed and abrupt, that they seem to pierce the sky. From this glacier we saw, as we sat on a rock, close to one of the streams of the Arveiron, masses of ice detach themselves from on high, and rush with a loud dull noise into the vale. The violence of their fall turned them into powder, which flowed over the rocks in imitation of waterfalls, whose ravines they usurped and filled.

In the evening I went with Ducrée, my guide, the only tolerable person I have seen in this country, to visit the glacier of Bossons. This glacier, like that of Montanvert, comes close

to the vale, overhanging the green meadows and the dark woods with the dazzling whiteness of its precipices and pinnacles, which are like spires of radiant crystal, covered with a net-work of frosted silver. These glaciers flow perpetually into the valley, ravaging in their slow but irresistible progress the pastures and the forests which surround them, performing a work of desolation in ages, which a river of lava might accomplish in an hour, but far more irretrievably; for where the ice has once descended, the hardiest plant refuses to grow; if even, as in some extraordinary instances, it should recede after its progress has once commenced. The glaciers perpetually move onward, at the rate of a foot each day, with a motion that commences at the spot where, on the boundaries of perpetual congelation, they are produced by the freezing of the waters which arise from the partial melting of the eternal snows. They drag with them, from the regions whence they derive their origin, all the ruins of the mountain, enormous rocks, and immense accumulations of sand and stones. These are driven onwards by the irresistible stream of solid ice; and when they arrive at a declivity of the mountain, sufficiently rapid, roll down, scattering ruin. I saw one of these rocks which had descended in the spring (winter here is the season of silence and safety), which measured forty feet in every direction.

The verge of a glacier, like that of Bossons, presents the most vivid image of desolation that it is possible to conceive. No one dares to approach it; for the enormous pinnacles of ice which perpetually fall, are perpetually reproduced. The pines of the forest, which bound it at one extremity, are overthrown and shattered, to a wide extent, at its base. There is something inexpressibly dreadful in the aspect of the few branchless trunks, which, nearest to the ice rifts, still stand in the uprooted soil. The meadows perish, overwhelmed with sand and stones. Within this last year, these glaciers have advanced three hundred feet into the valley. Saussure, the naturalist, says, that they have their periods of increase and decay: the people of the country hold an opinion entirely different; but as I judge, more probable. It is agreed by all, that the snow on the summit of Mont Blanc and the neighbouring mountains perpetually augments, and that ice, in the form of glaciers, subsists without melting in the valley of Chamouni during its transient and variable summer. If the snow which produces this glacier must augment, and the heat of the valley is no obstacle to the perpetual existence of such masses of ice as have already descended

into it, the consequence is obvious; the glaciers must augment and will subsist, at least until they have overflowed this vale.

I will not pursue Buffon's sublime but gloomy theory—that this globe which we inhabit will, at some future period, be changed into a mass of frost by the encroachments of the polar ice, and of that produced on the most elevated points of the earth. Do you, who assert the supremacy of Ahriman, imagine him throned among these desolating snows, among these palaces of death and frost, so sculptured in this their terrible magnificence by the adamantine hand of necessity, and that he casts around him, as the first essays of his final usurpation, avalanches, torrents, rocks, and thunders, and above all these deadly glaciers, at once the proof and symbols of his reign—add to this, the degradation of the human species—who, in these regions, are half deformed or idiotic, and most of whom are deprived of anything that can excite interest or admiration. This is part of the subject more mournful and less sublime; but such as neither the poet nor the philosopher should disdain to regard.

This morning we departed, on the promise of a fine day, to visit the glacier of Montanvert. In that part where it fills a slanting valley, it is called the Sea of Ice. This valley is 950 toises, or 7,600 feet, above the level of the sea. We had not proceeded far before the rain began to fall, but we persisted until we had accomplished more than half of our journey, when we returned, wet through.

CHAMOUNI, July 25th.

We have returned from visiting the glacier of Montanvert, or as it is called, the Sea of Ice, a scene in truth of dizzying wonder. The path that winds to it along the side of a mountain, now clothed with pines, now intersected with snowy hollows, is wide and steep. The cabin of Montanvert is three leagues from Chamouni, half of which distance is performed on mules, not so surefooted but that on the first day the one which I rode fell in what the guides call a *mauvais pas*, so that I narrowly escaped being precipitated down the mountain. We passed over a hollow covered with snow, down which vast stones are accustomed to roll. One had fallen the preceding day, a little time after we had returned: our guides desired us to pass quickly, for it is said that sometimes the least sound will accelerate their descent. We arrived at Montanvert, however, safe.

On all sides precipitous mountains, the abodes of unrelenting

frost, surround this vale: their sides are banked up with ice and snow, broken, heaped high, and exhibiting terrific chasms. The summits are sharp and naked pinnacles, whose overhanging steepness will not even permit snow to rest upon them. Lines of dazzling ice occupy here and there their perpendicular rifts, and shine through the driving vapours with inexpressible brilliance: they pierce the clouds like things not belonging to this earth. The vale itself is filled with a mass of undulating ice, and has an ascent sufficiently gradual even to the remotest abysses of these horrible deserts. It is only half a league (about two miles) in breadth, and seems much less. It exhibits an appearance as if frost had suddenly bound up the waves and whirlpools of a mighty torrent. We walked some distance upon its surface. The waves are elevated about twelve or fifteen feet from the surface of the mass, which is intersected by long gaps of unfathomable depth, the ice of whose sides is more beautifully azure than the sky. In these regions everything changes, and is in motion. This vast mass of ice has one general progress, which ceases neither day nor night; it breaks and bursts for ever: some undulations sink while others rise: it is never the same. The echo of rocks, or of the ice and snow which fall from their overhanging precipices, or roll from their aerial summits, scarcely ceases for one moment. One would think that Mont Blanc, like the god of the Stoics, was a vast animal, and that the frozen blood for ever circulated through his stony veins.

We dined (Mary, Claire, and I) on the grass, in the open air, surrounded by this scene. The air is piercing and clear. We returned down the mountain sometimes encompassed by the driving vapours, sometimes cheered by the sunbeams, and arrived at our inn by seven o'clock.

MONTALEGRE, *July 28th.*

The next morning we returned through the rain to St. Martin. The scenery had lost something of its immensity, thick clouds hanging over the highest mountains; but visitings of sunlight intervened between the showers, and the blue sky shone between the accumulated clouds of snowy whiteness which brought them; the dazzling mountains sometimes glittered through a chasm of the clouds above our heads, and all the charm of its grandeur remained. We repassed *Pont Pellisier*, a wooden bridge over the Arve, and the ravine of the Arve. We repassed the pine forests which overhang the defile, the chateau of

St. Michael; a haunted ruin, built on the edge of a precipice, and shadowed over by the eternal forest. We repassed the vale of Servoz, a vale more beautiful, because more luxuriant, than that of Chamouni. Mont Blanc forms one of the sides of this vale also, and the other is enclosed by an irregular amphitheatre of enormous mountains, one of which is in ruins, and fell fifty years ago into the higher part of the valley: the smoke of its fall was seen in Piedmont, and people went from Turin to investigate whether a volcano had not burst forth among the Alps. It continued falling many days, spreading, with the shock and thunder of its ruin, consternation into the neighbouring vales. In the evening we arrived at St. Martin. The next day we wound through the valley, which I have described before, and arrived in the evening at our home.

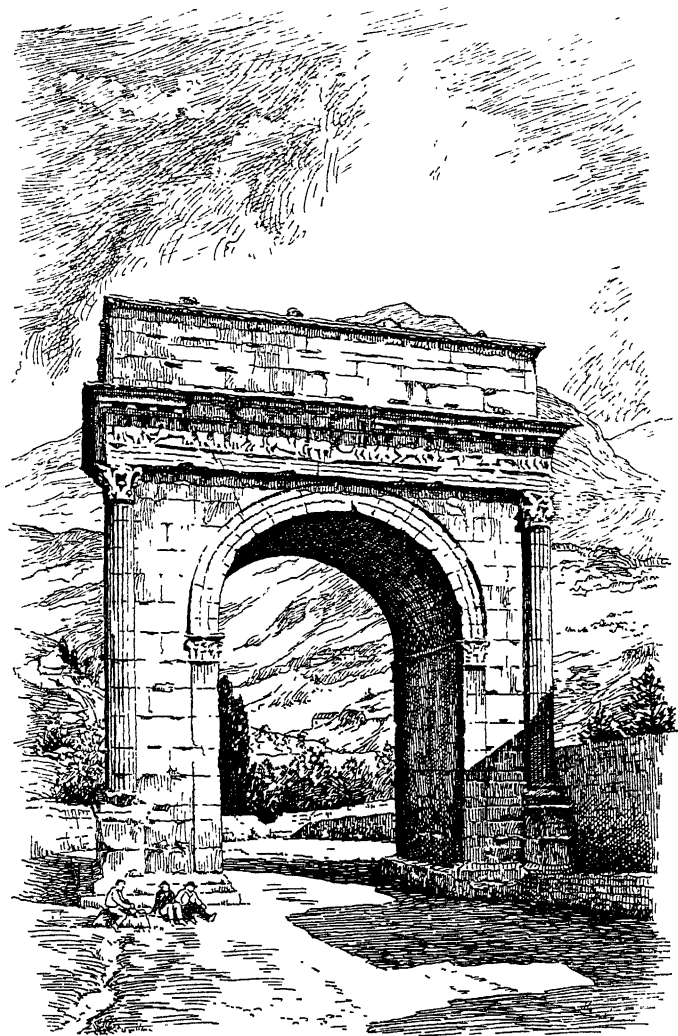
We have bought some specimens of minerals and plants, and two or three crystal seals, at Mont Blanc, to preserve the remembrance of having approached it. There is a cabinet of *histoire naturelle* at Chamouni, just as at Keswick, Matlock, and Clifton: the proprietor of which is the very vilest specimen of that vile species of quack, that, together with the whole army of aubergistes and guides, and indeed the entire mass of the population subsist on the weakness and credulity of travellers as leeches subsist on the sick. The most interesting of my purchases is a large collection of all the seeds of rare alpine plants, with their names written upon the outside of the papers that contain them. These I mean to colonize in my garden in England, and to permit you to make what choice you please from them. They are companions which the Celandine—the classic Celandine—need not despise;<sup>1</sup> they are as wild and more daring than he, and will tell him tales of things even as touching and sublime as the gaze of a vernal poet.

Did I tell you that there are troops of wolves among these mountains? In the winter they descend into the valleys, which the snow occupies six months of the year, and devour everything that they can find out of doors. A wolf is more powerful than the fiercest and strongest dog. There are no bears in these regions. We heard, when we were in Lucerne, that they were occasionally found in the forests which surround that lake.

Adieu,

S.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Peacock's note on the celandine, Letter 22, p. 444.



TRIUMPHAL ARCH OF AUGUSTUS AT SUSA





## LETTER 5

MILAN, April, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Behold us arrived at length at the end of our journey—that is, within a few miles of it—because we design to spend the summer on the shore of the lake of Como. Our journey was somewhat painful from the cold—and in no other manner interesting until we passed the Alps: of course I except the Alps themselves; but no sooner had we arrived at Italy, than the loveliness of the earth and the serenity of the sky made the greatest difference in my sensations. I depend on these things for life; for in the smoke of cities, and the tumult of human kind, and the chilling fogs and rain of our own country, I can hardly be said to live. With what delight did I hear the woman, who conducted us to see the triumphal arch of Augustus at Susa, speak the clear and complete language of Italy, though half unintelligible to me, after that nasal and abbreviated cacophony of the French. A ruined arch of magnificent proportions, in the Greek taste, standing in a kind of road of green lawn overgrown with violets and primroses, and in the midst of stupendous mountains, and a *blonde* woman, of light and graceful manners, something in the style of Fuseli's Eve, were the first things we met in Italy.

This city is very agreeable. We went to the opera last night—which is a most splendid exhibition. The opera itself was not a favourite, and the singers very inferior to our own. But the ballet, or rather a kind of melodrama or pantomimic drama, was the most splendid spectacle I ever saw. We have no Miss Melanie here—in every other respect, Milan is unquestionably superior. The manner in which language is translated into gesture, the complete and full effect of the whole as illustrating the history in question, the unaffected self-possession of each of the actors, even to the children, made this choral drama more impressive than I could have conceived possible. The story is *Othello*, and strange to say, it left no disagreeable impression.

I write, but I am not in the humour to write, and you must expect longer, if not more entertaining, letters soon—that is, in a week or so—when I am a little recovered from my journey. Pray tell us all the news with regard to our own offspring, whom we left at nurse in England; as well as those of our friends. Mention Cobbett and politics too—and Hunt—to whom Mary is now writing—and particularly your own plans and yourself. You shall hear more of me and my plans soon. My health is

improved already—and my spirits something—and I have many literary schemes, and one in particular—which I thirst to be settled that I may begin. I have ordered Ollier to send you some sheets, etc., for revision. Adieu.—Always faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 6

MILAN, *April* 20, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I had no conception that the distance between us, measured by time in respect of letters, was so great. I have but just received yours dated the 2nd—and when you will receive mine written from this city somewhat later than the same date, I cannot know. I am sorry to hear that you have been obliged to remain at Marlow; a certain degree of society being almost a necessity of life, particularly as we are not to see you this summer in Italy. But this, I suppose, must be as it is. I often revisit Marlow in thought. The curse of this life is, that whatever is once known, can never be unknown. You inhabit a spot, which before you inhabit it, is as indifferent to you as any other spot upon earth, and when, persuaded by some necessity, you think to leave it, you leave it not; it clings to you—and with memories of things, which, in your experience of them, gave no such promise, revenges your desertion. Time flows on, places are changed; friends who were with us, are no longer with us; yet what has been seems yet to be, but barren and stripped of life. See, I have sent you a study for *Nightmare Abbey*.

Since I last wrote to you we have been to Como, looking for a house. This lake exceeds any thing I ever beheld in beauty, with the exception of the arbutus islands of Killarney. It is long and narrow, and has the appearance of a mighty river winding among the mountains and the forests. We sailed from the town of Como to a tract of country called the Tremezina, and saw the various aspects presented by that part of the lake. The mountains between Como and that village, or rather cluster of villages, are covered on high with chestnut forests (the eating chestnuts, on which the inhabitants of the country subsist in time of scarcity), which sometimes descend to the very verge of the lake, overhanging it with their hoary branches. But usually the immediate border of this shore is composed of laurel-trees, and bay, and myrtle, and wild fig-trees, and olives, which grow in the crevices of the rocks, and overhang the caverns, and

shadow the deep glens, which are filled with the flashing light of the waterfalls. Other flowering shrubs, which I cannot name, grow there also. On high, the towers of village churches are seen white among the dark forests. Beyond, on the opposite shore, which faces the south, the mountains descend less precipitously to the lake, and although they are much higher, and some covered with perpetual snow, there intervenes between them and the lake a range of lower hills, which have glens and rifts opening to the other, such as I should fancy the *abysses* of Ida or Parnassus. Here are plantations of olive, and orange, and lemon trees, which are now so loaded with fruit, that there is more fruit than leaves—and vineyards. This shore of the lake is one continued village, and the Milanese nobility have their villas here. The union of culture and the untameable profusion and loveliness of nature is here so close, that the line where they are divided can hardly be discovered. But the finest scenery is that of the Villa Pliniana; so called from a fountain which ebbs and flows every three hours, described by the younger Pliny, which is in the courtyard. This house, which was once a magnificent palace, and is now half in ruins, we are endeavouring to procure. It is built upon terraces *raised from* the bottom of the lake, together with its garden, at the foot of a semicircular precipice, overshadowed by profound forests of chestnut. The scene from the colonnade is the most extraordinary, at once, and the most lovely that eye ever beheld. On one side is the mountain, and immediately over you are clusters of cypress-trees of an astonishing height, which seem to pierce the sky. Above you, from among the clouds, as it were, descends a waterfall of immense size, broken by the woody rocks into a thousand channels to the lake. On the other side is seen the blue extent of the lake and the mountains, speckled with sails and spires. The apartments of the Pliniana are immensely large, but ill furnished and antique. The terraces, which overlook the lake, and conduct under the shade of such immense laurel-trees as deserve the epithet of Pythian, are most delightful. We staid at Como two days, and have now returned to Milan, waiting the issue of our negotiation about a house. Como is only six leagues from Milan, and its mountains are seen from the cathedral.

This cathedral is a most astonishing work of art. It is built of white marble, and cut into pinnacles of immense height, and the utmost delicacy of workmanship, and loaded with sculpture. The effect of it, piercing the solid blue with those groups of

dazzling spires, relieved by the serene depth of this Italian heaven, or by moonlight when the stars seem gathered among those clustered shapes, is beyond anything I had imagined architecture capable of producing. The interior, though very sublime, is of a more earthly character, and with its stained glass and massy granite columns overloaded with antique figures, and the silver lamps, that burn for ever under the canopy of black cloth beside the brazen altar and the marble fretwork of the dome, give it the aspect of some gorgeous sepulchre. There is one solitary spot among those aisles, behind the altar, where the light of day is dim and yellow under the storied window, which I have chosen to visit, and read Dante there.

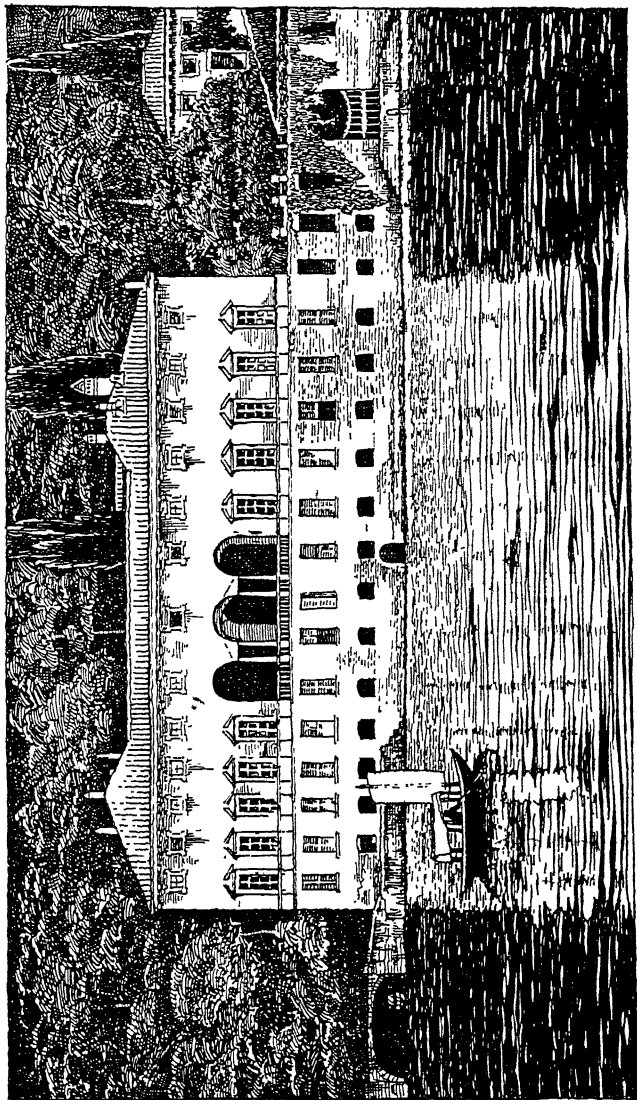
I have devoted this summer, and indeed the next year, to the composition of a tragedy on the subject of Tasso's madness, which I find upon inspection is, if properly treated, admirably dramatic and poetical. But, you will say, I have no dramatic talent; very true, in a certain sense; but I have taken the resolution to see what kind of a tragedy a person without dramatic talent could write. It shall be better morality than *Fazio*,<sup>1</sup> and better poetry than *Bertram*,<sup>2</sup> at least. You tell me nothing of *Rhododaphne*,<sup>3</sup> a book from which, I confess, I expected extraordinary success.

Who lives in my house at Marlow now, or what is to be done with it? I am seriously persuaded that the situation was injurious to my health, or I should be tempted to feel a very absurd interest in who is to be its next possessor. The expense of our journey here has been very considerable—but we are now living at the hotel here, in a kind of Pension, which is very reasonable in respect of price, and when we get into a menage of our own, we have every reason to expect that we shall experience something of the boasted cheapness of Italy. The finest bread, made of a sifted flour, the whitest and the best I ever tasted, is only *one English penny* a pound. All the necessaries of life bear a proportional relation to this. But then the luxuries, tea, etc., are very dear—and the English, as usual, are cheated in a way that is quite ridiculous, if they have not their wits about them. We do not know a single human being, and the opera, until last night, has been always the same. Lord Byron, we hear, has taken a house for three years, at Venice; whether we shall see him or not, I do not know. The number of English who pass through this town is very great. They ought to be in

<sup>1</sup> By Dean Milman.

<sup>2</sup> By Maturin.

<sup>3</sup> The most ambitious of Peacock's poems.



VILLA PLINIANA, LAKE COMO



their own country in the present crisis. Their conduct is wholly inexcusable. The people here, though inoffensive enough, seem both in body and soul a miserable race. The men are hardly men; they look like a tribe of stupid and shrivelled slaves, and I do not think that I have seen a gleam of intelligence in the countenance of man since I passed the Alps. The women in enslaved countries are always better than the men; but they have tight-laced figures, and figures and mien which express (O how unlike the French!) a mixture of the coquette and prude, which reminds me of the worst characteristics of the English.<sup>1</sup> Everything but humanity is in much greater perfection here than in France. The cleanliness and comfort of the inns is something quite English. The country is beautifully cultivated; and altogether, if you can, as one ought always to do, find your happiness in yourself, it is a most delightful and commodious place to live in.

Adieu.—Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 7

MILAN, *April 30th*, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I write, simply to tell you, to direct your next letters, *Poste Restante*, Pisa. We have engaged a vetturino for that city, and leave Milan to-morrow morning. Our journey will occupy six or seven days.

Pisa is not six miles from the Mediterranean, with which it communicates by the river Arno. We shall pass by Piacenza, Parma, Bologna, the Apennines, and Florence, and I will endeavour to tell you something of these celebrated places in my next letter; but I cannot promise much, for, though my health is much improved, my spirits are unequal, and seem to desert me when I attempt to write.

Pisa, they say, is uninhabitable in the midst of summer—we shall do, therefore, what other people do, retire to Florence, or to the mountains. But I will write to you our plans from Pisa, when I shall understand them better myself.

<sup>1</sup> These impressions of Shelley, with regard to the Italians, formed in ignorance, and with precipitation, became altogether altered after a longer stay in Italy. He quickly discovered the extraordinary intelligence and genius of this wonderful people, amidst the ignorance in which they are carefully kept by their rulers, and the vices, fostered by a religious system, which these same rulers have used as their most successful engine. [M. S.]

You may easily conjecture the motives which led us to forgo the divine solitude of Como. To me, whose chief pleasure in life is the contemplation of nature, you may imagine how great is this loss.

Let us hear from you *once a fortnight*. Do not forget those who do not forget you.

Adieu.—Ever most sincerely yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER 8

LIVORNO, *June 5, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

We have not heard from you since the middle of April—that is, we have received only *one* letter from you since our departure from England. It necessarily follows that some accident has intercepted them. Address, in future, to the care of Mr. Gisborne, Livorno—and I shall receive them, though sometimes somewhat circuitously, yet always securely.

We left Milan on the 1st of May, and travelled across the Apennines to Pisa. This part of the Apennine is far less beautiful than the Alps; the mountains are wide and wild, and the whole scenery broad and undetermined—the imagination cannot find a home in it. The plain of the Milanese, and that of Parma is exquisitely beautiful—it is like one garden, or rather cultivated wilderness; because the corn and the meadow-grass grow under high and thick trees, festooned to one another by regular festoons of vines. On the seventh day we arrived at Pisa, where we remained three or four days. A large disagreeable city almost without inhabitants. We then proceeded to this great trading town, where we have remained a month, and which, in a few days, we leave for the Bagni di Lucca, a kind of watering place situated in the depth of the Apennines; the scenery surrounding this village is very fine.

We have made some acquaintance with a very amiable and accomplished lady, Mrs. Gisborne, who is the sole attraction in this most unattractive of cities. We had no idea of spending a month here, but she has made it even agreeable. We shall see something of Italian society at the Bagni di Lucca, where the most fashionable people resort.

When you send my parcel—which, by the by, I should request you to direct to Mr. Gisborne—I wish you could contrive to enclose the two last parts of Clarke's *Travels*, relating to Greece



and belonging to Hookham. You know I subscribe there still—and I have determined to take the *Examiner* here. You would, therefore, oblige me, by sending it weekly, after having read it yourself, to the same direction, and so clipped, as to make as little weight as possible.

I write as if writing where perhaps my letter may never arrive.

With every good wish from all of us,

Believe me most sincerely yours,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 9

BAGNI DI LUCCA, July 25<sup>th</sup>, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I received on the same day your letters marked 5 and 6, the one directed to Pisa and the other to Livorno, and I can assure you they are most welcome visitors.

Our life here is as unvaried by any external events as if we were at Marlow, where a sail up the river or a journey to London makes an epoch. Since I last wrote to you, I have ridden over to Lucca, once with Claire, and once alone; and we have been over to the Casino, where I cannot say there is anything remarkable, the women being far removed from anything which the most liberal annotator could interpret into beauty or grace, and apparently possessing no intellectual excellences to compensate the deficiency. I assure you it is well that it is so, for the dances, especially the waltz, are so exquisitely beautiful that it would be a little dangerous to the newly unfrozen senses and imaginations of us migrators from the neighbourhood of the pole. As it is—except in the dark—there could be no peril. The atmosphere here, unlike that of the rest of Italy, is diversified with clouds, which grow in the middle of the day, and sometimes bring thunder and lightning, and hail about the size of a pigeon's egg, and decrease towards the evening, leaving only those finely woven webs of vapour which we see in English skies, and flocks of fleecy and slowly moving clouds, which all vanish before sunset; and the nights are for ever serene, and we see a star in the east at sunset—I think it is Jupiter—almost as fine as Venus was last summer; but it wants a certain silver and ærial radiance, and soft yet piercing splendour, which belongs, I suppose, to the latter planet by virtue of its at once divine and female nature. I have forgotten to ask the ladies if Jupiter produces on them

the same effect. I take great delight in watching the changes of the atmosphere. In the evening, Mary and I often take a ride, for horses are cheap in this country. In the middle of the day, I bathe in a pool or fountain, formed in the middle of the forests by a torrent. It is surrounded on all sides by precipitous rocks, and the waterfall of the stream which forms it falls into it on one side with perpetual dashing. Close to it, on the top of the rocks, are alders, and above the great chestnut trees, whose long and pointed leaves pierce the deep blue sky in strong relief. The water of this pool, which, to venture an unrythmical paraphrase, is 'sixteen feet long and ten feet wide', is as transparent as the air, so that the stones and sand at the bottom seem, as it were, trembling in the light of noonday. It is exceedingly cold also. My custom is to undress and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain—a practice in the hot weather excessively refreshing. This torrent is composed, as it were, of a succession of pools and waterfalls, up which I sometimes amuse myself by climbing when I bathe, and receiving the spray over all my body, whilst I clamber up the moist crags with difficulty.

I have lately found myself totally incapable of original composition. I employed my mornings, therefore, in translating the *Symposium*, which I accomplished in ten days. Mary is now transcribing it, and I am writing a prefatory essay. I have been reading scarcely anything but Greek, and a little Italian poetry with Mary. We have finished *Ariosto* together—a thing I could not have done again alone.

*Frankenstein* seems to have been well received; for although the unfriendly criticism of the *Quarterly* is an evil for it, yet it proves that it is read in some considerable degree, and it would be difficult for them, with any appearance of fairness, to deny it merit altogether. Their notice of me, and their exposure of their true motives for not noticing my book, shows how well understood an hostility must subsist between me and them.

The news of the result of the elections, especially that of the metropolis, is highly inspiring. I received a letter, of two days' later date, with yours, which announced the unfortunate termination of that of Westmoreland. I wish you had sent me some of the overflowing villany of those apostates. What a beastly and pitiful wretch that Wordsworth! That such a man should be such a poet! I can compare him with no one but Simonides, that flatterer of the Sicilian tyrants, and at the same time the most natural and tender of lyric poets.

What pleasure would it have given me if the wings of imagination could have divided the space which divides us, and I could have been of your party. I have seen nothing so beautiful as Virginia Water in its kind. And my thoughts for ever cling to Windsor Forest, and the copses of Marlow, like the clouds which hang upon the woods of the mountains, low trailing, and though they pass away, leave their best dew when they themselves have faded. You tell me that you have finished *Nightmare Abbey*. I hope that you have given the enemy no quarter. Remember, it is a sacred war. We have found an excellent quotation in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*. I will transcribe it, as I do not think you have these plays at Marlow.

'MATTHEW. Oh, it's your only fine humour, sir. Your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir. I am melancholy myself divers times, sir; and then do I no more but take pen and paper presently, and overflow you half a score or a dozen of sonnets at a sitting.

'ED. KNOWELL. Sure, he utters them by the gross.

'STEPHEN. Truly, sir; and I love such things out of measure.

'ED. KNOWELL. I' faith, better than in measure, I'll undertake.

'MATTHEW. Why, I pray you, sir, make use of my study; it's at your service.

'STEPHEN. I thank you, sir; I shall be bold, I warrant you. *Have you a stool there to be melancholy upon?*'—*Every Man in his Humour*, Act III, scene i.

The last expression would not make a bad motto.<sup>1</sup>

## LETTER 10

BAGNI DE LUCCA, Aug. 16th, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

No new event has been added to my life since I wrote last: at least none which might not have taken place as well on the banks of the Thames as on those of the Serchio. I project soon a short excursion, of a week or so, to some of the neighbouring cities; and on the 10th of September we leave this place for Florence, when I shall at least be able to tell you of some things which you cannot see from your windows.

<sup>1</sup> I adopted this passage as a second motto, omitting E. Knowell's interlocutions. [T. L. P.]

I have finished, by taking advantage of a few days of inspiration—which the *Camœnae* have been lately very backward in conceding—the little poem I began sending to the press in London.<sup>1</sup> Ollier will send you the proofs. Its structure is slight and æry; its subject ideal. The metre corresponds with the spirit of the poem, and varies with the flow of the feeling. I have translated, and Mary has transcribed, the *Symposium*, as well as my poem; and I am proceeding to employ myself on a discourse, upon the subject of which the *Symposium* treats, considering the subject with reference to the difference of sentiments respecting it, existing between the Greeks and modern nations; a subject to be handled with that delicate caution which either I cannot or I will not practise in other matters, but which here I acknowledge to be necessary. Not that I have any serious thought of publishing either this discourse or the *Symposium*, at least till I return to England, when we may discuss the propriety of it.

*Nightmare Abbey* finished. Well, what is in it? What is it? You are as secret as if the priest of Ceres had dictated its sacred pages. However, I suppose I shall see in time, when my second parcel arrives. My first is yet absent. By what conveyance did you send it?

Pray, are you yet cured of your Nympholepsy? 'Tis a sweet disease: but one as obstinate and dangerous as any—even when the Nymph is a Poliad.<sup>2</sup> Whether such be the case or not, I hope your nympholeptic tale is not abandoned.<sup>3</sup> The subject, if treated with a due spice of Bacchic fury, and interwoven with the manners and feelings of those divine people, who, in their very errors, are the mirrors, as it were, in which all that is delicate and graceful contemplates itself, is perhaps equal to any. What a wonderful passage there is in *Phaedrus*—the beginning, I think, of one of the speeches of Socrates<sup>4</sup>—in praise

<sup>1</sup> *Rosalina and Helen*.

<sup>2</sup> I suppose I understood this at the time; but I have now not the most distant recollection of what it alludes to. [T. L. P.]

<sup>3</sup> I abandoned this design on seeing the announcement of Horace Smith's *Amarynthus the Nympholept*. [T. L. P.]

<sup>4</sup> The passage alluded to is this: 'There are several kinds', says Socrates, 'of divine madness. That which proceeds from the Muses taking possession of a tender and unoccupied soul, awakening, and bacchically inspiring it towards songs and other poetry, adorning myriads of ancient deeds, instructs succeeding generations; but he who, without this madness from the Muses, approaches the poetical gates, having persuaded himself that by art alone he may become sufficiently a poet, will find in the end his own imperfections, and see the poetry of his cold prudence vanish into nothingness before the light of that which has sprung from divine insanity'.—*Platonis Phaedrus*, p. 245 a. [T. L. P.]

of poetic madness, and in definition of what poetry is, and how a man becomes a poet. Every man who lives in this age and desires to write poetry, ought, as a preservative against the false and narrow systems of criticism which every poetical empiric vents, to impress himself with this sentence, if he would be numbered among those to whom may apply this proud, though sublime, expression of Tasso: *Non c'è in mondo chi merita nome di creatore, che Dio ed il Poeta.*

The weather has been brilliantly fine; and now, among these mountains, the autumnal air is becoming less hot, especially in the mornings and evenings. The chestnut woods are now inexpressibly beautiful, for the chestnuts have become large, and add a new richness to the full foliage. We see here Jupiter in the east; and Venus, I believe, as the evening star, directly after sunset.

More and better in my next. Mary and Claire desire their kind remembrances. Most faithfully your friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER II

ESTE, October 8, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

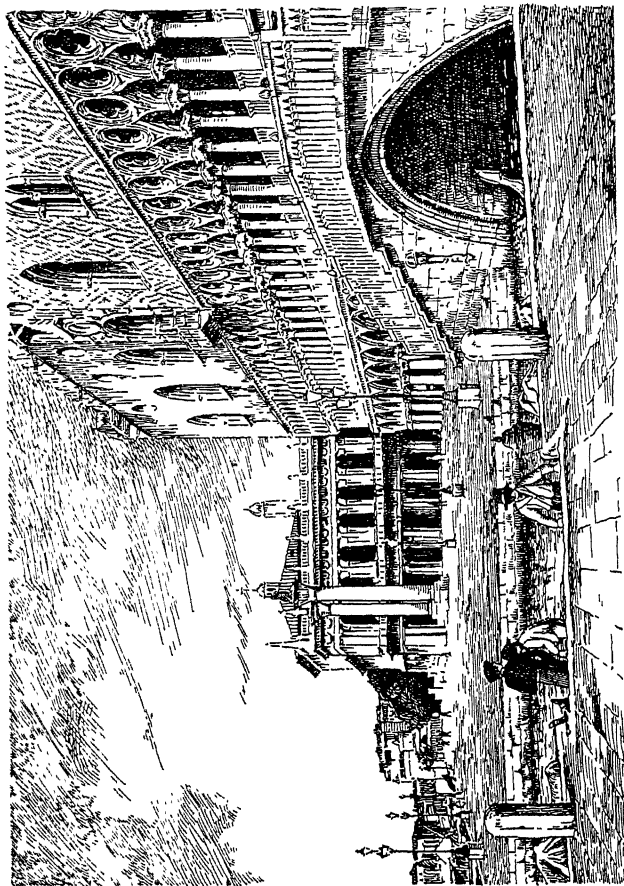
I have not written to you, I think, for six weeks. But I have been on the point of writing many times, and have often felt that I had many things to say. But I have not been without events to disturb and distract me, amongst which is the death of my little girl. She died of a disorder peculiar to the climate. We have all had bad spirits enough, and I, in addition, bad health. I *intend* to be better soon; there is no malady, bodily or mental, which does not either kill or is killed.

We left the Baths of Lucca, I think, the day after I wrote to you—on a visit to Venice—partly for the sake of seeing the city. We made a very delightful acquaintance there with a Mr. and Mrs. Hoppner, the gentleman an Englishman, and the lady a Swissesse, mild and beautiful, and unprejudiced, in the best sense of the word. The kind attentions of these people made our short stay at Venice very pleasant. I saw Lord Byron, and really hardly knew him again; he is changed into the liveliest and happiest-looking man I ever met. He read me the first canto of his *Don Juan*—a thing in the style of *Beppo*, but infinitely better, and dedicated to Southey, in ten or a dozen

stanzas, more like a mixture of wormwood and verdigrease than satire. Venice is a wonderfully fine city. The approach to it over the laguna, with its domes and turrets glittering in a long line over the blue waves, is one of the finest architectural delusions in the world. It seems to have—and literally it has—its foundations in the sea. The silent streets are paved with water, and you hear nothing but the dashing of the oars, and the occasional cries of the gondolieri. I heard nothing of Tasso. The gondolas themselves are things of a most romantic and picturesque appearance; I can only compare them to moths of which a coffin might have been the chrysalis. They are hung with black, and painted black, and carpeted with grey; they curl at the prow and stern, and at the former there is a nondescript beak of shining steel, which glitters at the end of its long black mass.

The Doge's palace, with its library, is a fine monument of aristocratic power. I saw the dungeons, where these scoundrels used to torment their victims. They are of three kinds—one adjoining the place of trial, where the prisoners destined to immediate execution were kept. I could not descend into them, because the day on which I visited it was festa. Another under the leads of the palace, where the sufferers were roasted to death or madness by the ardours of an Italian sun: and others called the Pozzi—or wells, deep underneath, and communicating with those on the roof by secret passages—where the prisoners were confined sometimes half up to their middles in stinking water. When the French came here, they found only one old man in the dungeons, and he could not speak. But Venice, which was once a tyrant, is now the next worst thing, a slave; for in fact it ceased to be free, or worth our regret as a nation, from the moment that the oligarchy usurped the rights of the people. Yet, I do not imagine that it was ever so degraded as it has been since the French, and especially the Austrian yoke. The Austrians take sixty per cent in taxes, and impose free quarters on the inhabitants. A horde of German soldiers, as vicious and more disgusting than the Venetians themselves, insult these miserable people. I had no conception of the excess to which avarice, cowardice, superstition, ignorance, passionless lust, and all the inexpressible brutalities which degrade human nature, could be carried, until I had passed a few days at Venice.

We have been living this last month near the little town from which I date this letter, in a very pleasant villa which has been lent to us, and we are now on the point of proceeding to Florence,



THE DOGE'S PALACE, VENICE





Rome, and Naples—at which last city we shall spend the winter, and return northwards in the spring. Behind us here are the Euganean hills, not so beautiful as those of the Bagni di Lucca, with Arquà, where Petrarch's house and tomb are religiously preserved and visited. At the end of our garden is an extensive Gothic castle, now the habitation of owls and bats, where the Medici family resided before they came to Florence. We see before us the wide flat plains of Lombardy, in which we see the sun and moon rise and set, and the evening star, and all the golden magnificence of autumnal clouds. But I reserve wonder for Naples.

I have been writing—and indeed have just finished the first act of a lyric and classical drama, to be called *Prometheus Unbound*. Will you tell me what there is in Cicero about a drama supposed to have been written by Æschylus under this title.

I ought to say that I have just read Malthus in a French translation. Malthus is a very clever man, and the world would be a great gainer if it would seriously take his lessons into consideration, if it were capable of attending seriously to anything but mischief—but what on earth does he mean by some of his inferences!

Yours ever faithfully,

P. B. S.

I will write again from Rome and Florence—in better spirits, and to more agreeable purpose, I hope. You saw those beautiful stanzas in the fourth canto about the Nymph Egeria.<sup>1</sup> Well, I did not whisper a word about nympholepsy: I hope you acquit me—and I hope you will not carry delicacy so far as to let this suppress anything nympholeptic.

## LETTER 12

FERRARA, Nov. 8th, 1818.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

We left Este yesterday on our journey towards Naples. The roads were particularly bad; we have, therefore, accomplished only two days' journey, of eighteen and twenty-four miles each, and you may imagine that our horses must be tolerably good ones, to drag our carriage, with five people and heavy luggage,

<sup>1</sup> *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, canto iv, stanzas cxv to cxix.

through deep and clayey roads. The roads are, however, good during the rest of the way.

The country is flat, but intersected by lines of wood, trellised with vines, whose broad leaves are now stamped with the redness of their decay. Every here and there one sees people employed in agricultural labours, and the plough, the harrow, or the cart, drawn by long teams of milk-white or dove-coloured oxen of immense size and exquisite beauty. This, indeed, might be the country of Pasiphaes. In one farm-yard I was shown sixty-three of these lovely oxen, tied to their stalls, in excellent condition. A farm-yard in this part of Italy is somewhat different from one in England. First, the house, which is large and high, with strange-looking unpainted window-shutters, generally closed, and dreary beyond conception. The farm-yard and out-buildings, however, are usually in the neatest order. The threshing-floor is not under cover, but like that described in the *Georgics*, usually flattened by a broken column, and neither the mole, nor the toad, nor the ant, can find on its area a crevice for their dwelling. Around it, at this season, are piled the stacks of the leaves and stalks of Indian corn, which has lately been threshed and dried upon its surface. At a little distance are vast heaps of many-coloured zucche or pumpkins, some of enormous size, piled as winter food for the hogs. There are turkeys, too, and fowls wandering about, and two or three dogs, who bark with a sharp hylactism. The people who are occupied with the care of these things seem neither ill-clothed nor ill-fed, and the blunt incivility of their manners has an English air with it, very discouraging to those who are accustomed to the impudent and polished lying of the inhabitants of the cities. I should judge the agricultural resources of this country to be immense, since it can wear so flourishing an appearance, in spite of the enormous discouragements which the various tyranny of the governments inflicts on it. I ought to say that one of the farms belongs to a Jew banker at Venice, another Shylock. We arrived late at the inn where I now write; it was once the palace of a Venetian nobleman, and is now an excellent inn. To-morrow we are going to see the sights of Ferrara.

Nov. 9.

We have had heavy rain and thunder all night; and the former still continuing, we went in the carriage about the town. We went first to look at the cathedral, but the beggars very soon made us sound a retreat, so, whether, as it is said, there is a copy

of a picture of Michael Angelo there or no, I cannot tell. At the public library we were more successful. This is, indeed, a magnificent establishment, containing, as they say, 160,000 volumes. We saw some illuminated manuscripts of church music, with verses of the psalms interlined between the square notes, each of which consisted of the most delicate tracery, in colours inconceivably vivid. They belonged to the neighbouring convent of Certosa, and are three or four hundred years old; but their hues are as fresh as if they had been executed yesterday. The tomb of Ariosto occupies one end of the largest saloon of which the library is composed; it is formed of various marbles, surmounted by an expressive bust of the poet, and subscribed with a few Latin verses, in a less miserable taste than those usually employed for similar purposes. But the most interesting exhibitions here, are the writings, etc., of Ariosto and Tasso, which are preserved, and were concealed from the undistinguishing depredations of the French with pious care. There is the armchair of Ariosto, an old plain wooden piece of furniture, the hard seat of which was once occupied by, but has now survived its cushion, as it has its master. I could fancy Ariosto sitting in it; and the satires in his own handwriting which they unfold beside it, and the old bronze inkstand, loaded with figures, which belonged also to him, assists the willing delusion. This inkstand has an antique, rather than an ancient appearance. Three nymphs lean forth from the circumference, and on the top of the lid stands a cupid, winged and looking up, with a torch in one hand, his bow in the other, and his quiver beside him. A medal was bound round the skeleton of Ariosto, with his likeness impressed upon it. I cannot say I think it had much native expression, but perhaps the artist was in fault. On the reverse is a hand, cutting with a pair of scissors the tongue from a serpent, upraised from the grass, with this legend—*Pro bono malum*. What this reverse of the boasted Christian maxim means, or how it applies to Ariosto, either as a satirist or a serious writer, I cannot exactly tell. The cicerone attempted to explain, and it is to his commentary that my bewildering is probably due—if, indeed, the meaning be very plain, as is possibly the case.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dr Garnett explains this legend by the following quotation from Mr. C. F. Keary's *Guide to the Italian Medals exhibited in the British Museum*: 'The motto of this medal [by Poggini] is the same as that on the medal of Ariosto by Pastorini of Siena. But the meaning of the reverse design is very different. Both, it is probable, refer to the quarrel between Ariosto and the elder Cardinal d'Este; but one takes the side of the poet, who is

There is here a manuscript of the entire *Gerusalemme Liberata*, written by Tasso's own hand; a manuscript of some poems, written in prison, to the Duke Alfonso; and the satires of Ariosto, written also by his own hand; and the *Pastor Fido* of Guarini. The *Gerusalemme*, though it had evidently been copied and recopied, is interlined, particularly towards the end, with numerous corrections. The handwriting of Ariosto is a small, firm, and pointed character, expressing, as I should say, a strong and keen, but circumscribed energy of mind; that of Tasso is large, free, and flowing, except that there is a checked expression in the midst of its flow, which brings the letters into a smaller compass than one expected from the beginning of the word. It is the symbol of an intense and earnest mind, exceeding at times its own depth, and admonished to return by the chillness of the waters of oblivion striking upon its adventurous feet. You know I always seek in what I see the manifestation of something beyond the present and tangible object; and as we do not agree in physiognomy, so we may not agree now. But my business is to relate my own sensations, and not to attempt to inspire others with them. Some of the MSS. of Tasso were sonnets to his persecutor, which contain a great deal of what is called flattery. If Alfonso's ghost were asked how he felt those praises now, I wonder what he would say. But to me there is much more to pity than to condemn in these entreaties and praises of Tasso. It is as a bigot prays to and praises his god, whom he knows to be the most remorseless, capricious, and inflexible of tyrants, but whom he knows also to be omnipotent. Tasso's situation was widely different from that of any persecuted being of the present day; for, from the depth of dungeons, public opinion might now at length be awakened to an echo that would startle the oppressor. But then there was no hope. There is something irresistibly pathetic to me in the sight of Tasso's own handwriting, moulding expressions of adulation and entreaty to a deaf and stupid tyrant, in an age when the most heroic virtue would have exposed its possessor to hopeless persecution, and—such is the alliance between virtue and genius—which unoffending genius could not escape.

We went afterwards to see his prison in the hospital of Sant' Anna, and I enclose you a piece of the wood of the very door,

symbolized by the bees, expelled from their home as an ungrateful return for the honey which they have given; while the other medal, taking the side of Cardinal d'Este, symbolizes Ariosto as a serpent who stings those that have nurtured him.

which for seven years and three months divided this glorious being from the air and the light which had nourished in him those influences which he has communicated, through his poetry, to thousands. The dungeon is low and dark, and when I say that it is really a very decent dungeon, I speak as one who has seen the prisons in the doge's palace of Venice. But it is a horrible abode for the coarsest and meanest thing that ever wore the shape of man, much more for one of delicate susceptibilities and elevated fancies. It is low, and has a grated window, and being sunk some feet below the level of the earth, is full of unwholesome damps. In the darkest corner is a mark in the wall where the chains were riveted, which bound him hand and foot. After some time, at the instance of some cardinal, his friend, the duke allowed his victim a fireplace; the mark where it was walled up yet remains.

At the entrance of the Liceo, where the library is, we were met by a penitent; his form was completely enveloped in a ghost-like drapery of white flannel; his bare feet were sandalled; and there was a kind of network visor drawn over his eyes, so as entirely to conceal his face. I imagine that this man had been adjudged to suffer this penance for some crime known only to himself and his confessor, and this kind of exhibition is a striking instance of the power of the Catholic superstition over the human mind. He passed, rattling his wooden box for charity.<sup>1</sup>

Adieu.—You will hear from me again before I arrive at Naples.

Yours, ever sincerely,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 13

Bologna, *Monday, Nov. 9th, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have seen a quantity of things here—churches, palaces, statues, fountains, and pictures; and my brain is at this moment like a portfolio of an architect, or a print-shop, or a commonplace book. I will try to recollect something of what I have seen; for, indeed, it requires, if it will obey, an act of volition. First, we went to the cathedral, which contains nothing remarkable, except a kind of shrine, or rather a marble canopy, loaded with sculptures, and supported on four marble columns. We went

<sup>1</sup> These penitents ask alms, to be spent in masses for the souls in purgatory. [M. S.]

then to a palace—I am sure I forget the name of it—where we saw a large gallery of pictures. Of course, in a picture gallery you see three hundred pictures you forget, for one you remember. I remember, however, an interesting picture by Guido, of the Rape of Proserpine, in which Proserpine casts back her languid and half-unwilling eyes, as it were, to the flowers she had left ungathered in the fields of Enna. There was an exquisitely executed piece of Correggio, about four saints, one of whom seemed to have a pet dragon in a leash. I was told that it was the devil who was bound in that style—but who can make anything of four saints? For what can they be supposed to be about? There was one painting, indeed, by this master, Christ beatified, inexpressibly fine. It is a half figure, seated on a mass of clouds, tinged with an ethereal, rose-like lustre; the arms are expanded; the whole frame seems dilated with expression; the countenance is heavy, as it were, with the weight of the rapture of the spirit; the lips parted, but scarcely parted, with the breath of intense but regulated passion; the eyes are calm and benignant; the whole features harmonized in majesty and sweetness. The hair is parted on the forehead, and falls in heavy locks on each side. It is motionless, but seems as if the faintest breath would move it. The colouring, I suppose, must be very good, if I could remark and understand it. The sky is of a pale ærial orange, like the tints of latest sunset; it does not seem painted around and beyond the figure, but everything seems to have absorbed, and to have been penetrated by its hues. I do not think we saw any other of Correggio, but this specimen gives me a very exalted idea of his powers.

We went to see heaven knows how many more palaces—Ranuzzi, Marriscalchi, Aldobrandi. If you want Italian names for any purpose, here they are; I should be glad of them if I was writing a novel. I saw many more of Guido. One, a Samson drinking water out of an ass's jaw-bone, in the midst of the slaughtered Philistines. Why he is supposed to do this, God, who gave him this jaw-bone, alone knows—but certain it is, that the painting is a very fine one. The figure of Samson stands in strong relief in the foreground, coloured, as it were, in the hues of human life, and full of strength and elegance. Round him lie the Philistines in all the attitudes of death. One prone, with the slight convulsion of pain just passing from his forehead, whilst on his lips and chin death lies as heavy as sleep. Another leaning on his arm, with his hand, white and motionless, hanging out beyond. In the distance, more dead bodies; and, still

farther beyond, the blue sea and the blue mountains, and one white and tranquil sail.

There is a 'Murder of the Innocents', also, by Guido, finely coloured, with much fine expression—but the subject is very horrible, and it seemed deficient in strength—at least, you require the highest ideal energy, the most poetical and exalted conception of the subject, to reconcile you to such a contemplation. There was a Jesus Christ crucified, by the same, very fine. One gets tired, indeed, whatever may be the conception and execution of it, of seeing that monotonous and agonized form for ever exhibited in one prescriptive attitude of torture. But the Magdalen, clinging to the cross with the look of passive and gentle despair beaming from beneath her bright flaxen hair, and the figure of St. John, with his looks uplifted in passionate compassion; his hands clasped, and his fingers twisting themselves together, as it were, with involuntary anguish; his feet almost writhing up from the ground with the same sympathy; and the whole of this arrayed in colours of a diviner nature, yet most like nature's self—of the contemplation of this one would never weary.

There was a 'Fortune', too, of Guido; a piece of mere beauty. There was the figure of Fortune on a globe, eagerly proceeding onwards, and Love was trying to catch her back by the hair, and her face was half turned towards him; her long chestnut hair was floating in the stream of the wind, and threw its shadow over her fair forehead. Her hazel eyes were fixed on her pursuer with a meaning look of playfulness, and a light smile was hovering on her lips. The colours which arrayed her delicate limbs were ethereal and warm.

But, perhaps, the most interesting of all the pictures of Guido which I saw was a 'Madonna Lattante'. She is leaning over her child, and the maternal feelings with which she is pervaded are shadowed forth on her soft and gentle countenance, and in her simple and affectionate gestures—there is what an unfeeling observer would call a dullness in the expression of her face; her eyes are almost closed; her lip depressed; there is a serious, and even a heavy relaxation, as it were, of all the muscles which are called into action by ordinary emotions: but it is only as if the spirit of love, almost insupportable from its intensity, were brooding over and weighing down the soul, or whatever it is, without which the material frame is inanimate and inexpressive.

There is another painter here, called Franceschini, a Bolognese, who, though certainly very inferior to Guido, is yet a person of

excellent powers. One entire church, that of Santa Catarina, is covered by his works. I do not know whether any of his pictures have ever been seen in England. His colouring is less warm than that of Guido, but nothing can be more clear and delicate; it is as if he could have dipped his pencil in the hues of some serenest and star-shining twilight. His forms have the same delicacy and ærial loveliness; their eyes are all bright with innocence and love; their lips scarce divided by some gentle and sweet emotion. His winged children are the loveliest ideal beings ever created by the human mind. These are generally, whether in the capacity of Cherubim or Cupid, accessories to the rest of the picture; and the underplot of their lovely and infantine play is something almost pathetic, from the excess of his unpretending beauty. One of the best of his pieces is an 'Annunciation of the Virgin'; the Angel is beaming in beauty; the Virgin, soft, retiring, and simple.

We saw, besides, one picture of Raphael—'St. Cecilia'; this in in another and higher style; you forget that it is a picture as you look at it; and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived and executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry and sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations. There is a unity and a perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure, St. Cecilia, seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the painter's mind; her deep, dark, eloquent eyes lifted up; her chestnut hair flung back from her forehead—she holds an organ in her hands—her countenance, as it were, calmed by the depth of its passion and rapture, and penetrated throughout with the warm and radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of heaven, and, as I imagine, has just ceased to sing, for the four figures that surround her evidently point, by their attitudes, towards her; particularly St. John, who, with a tender yet impassioned gesture, bends his countenance towards her, languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie various instruments of music, broken and unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak; it eclipses Nature, yet it has all her truth and softness.

We saw some pictures of Domenichino, Caracci, Albano, Guercino, Elisabetta Sirani. The two former—remember, I do not pretend to taste—I cannot admire. Of the latter there are some beautiful Madonnas. There are several of Guercino, which they said were very fine. I dare say they were, for the strength



and complication of his figures made my head turn round. One, indeed, was certainly powerful. It was the representation of the founder of the Carthusians exercising his austerities in the desert, with a youth as his attendant, kneeling beside him at an altar; on another altar stood a skull and a crucifix; and around were the rocks and the trees of the wilderness. I never saw such a figure as this fellow. His face was wrinkled like a dried snake's skin, and drawn in long hard lines: his very hands were wrinkled. He looked like an animated mummy. He was clothed in a loose dress of death-coloured flannel, such as you might fancy a shroud might be, after it had wrapt a corpse a month or two. It had a yellow, putrefied, ghastly hue, which it cast on all the objects around, so that the hands and face of the Carthusian and his companion were jaundiced by this sepulchral glimmer. Why write books against religion, when we may hang up such pictures? But the world either will not or cannot see. The gloomy effect of this was softened, and, at the same time, its sublimity diminished, by the figure of the Virgin and Child in the sky, looking down with admiration on the monk, and a beautiful flying figure of an angel.

Enough of pictures. I saw the place where Guido and his mistress, Elisabetta Sirani, were buried. This lady was poisoned at the age of twenty-six, by another lover, a rejected one of course. Our guide said she was very ugly, and that we might see her portrait to-morrow.

Well, good night, for the present. 'To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new.'

*November 10.*

To-day we first went to see those divine pictures of Raphael and Guido again, and then rode up the mountains, behind this city, to visit a chapel dedicated to the Madonna. It made me melancholy to see that they had been varnishing and restoring some of these pictures, and that even some had been pierced by the French bayonets. These are symptoms of the mortality of man; and perhaps few of his works are more evanescent than paintings. Sculpture retains its freshness for twenty centuries—the Apollo and the Venus are as they were. But books are perhaps the only productions of man coeval with the human race. Sophocles and Shakespeare can be produced and reproduced for ever. But how evanescent are paintings! and must necessarily be. Those of Zeuxis and Apelles are no more, and perhaps they bore the same relation to Homer and Æschylus, that those of

Guido and Raphael bear to Dante and Petrarch. There is one refuge from the despondency of this contemplation. The material part, indeed, of their works must perish, but they survive in the mind of man, and the remembrances connected with them are transmitted from generation to generation. The poet embodies them in his creations; the systems of philosophers are modelled to gentleness by their contemplation; opinion, that legislator, is infected with their influence; men become better and wiser; and the unseen seeds are perhaps thus sown, which shall produce a plant more excellent even than that from which they fell. But all this might as well be said or thought at Marlow as Bologna.

The chapel of the Madonna is a very pretty Corinthian building—very beautiful, indeed. It commands a fine view of these fertile plains, the many-folded Apennines, and the city. I have just returned from a moonlight walk through Bologna. It is a city of colonnades, and the effect of moonlight is strikingly picturesque. There are two towers here—one 400 feet high—ugly things, built of brick, which lean both different ways; and with the delusion of moonlight shadows, you might almost fancy that the city is rocked by an earthquake. They say they were built so on purpose; but I observe in all the plain of Lombardy the church towers lean.

Adieu.—God grant you patience to read this long letter, and courage to support the expectation of the next. Pray part them from the *Cobbetts* on your breakfast table—they may fight it out in your mind.

Yours ever, most sincerely,  
P. B. S.

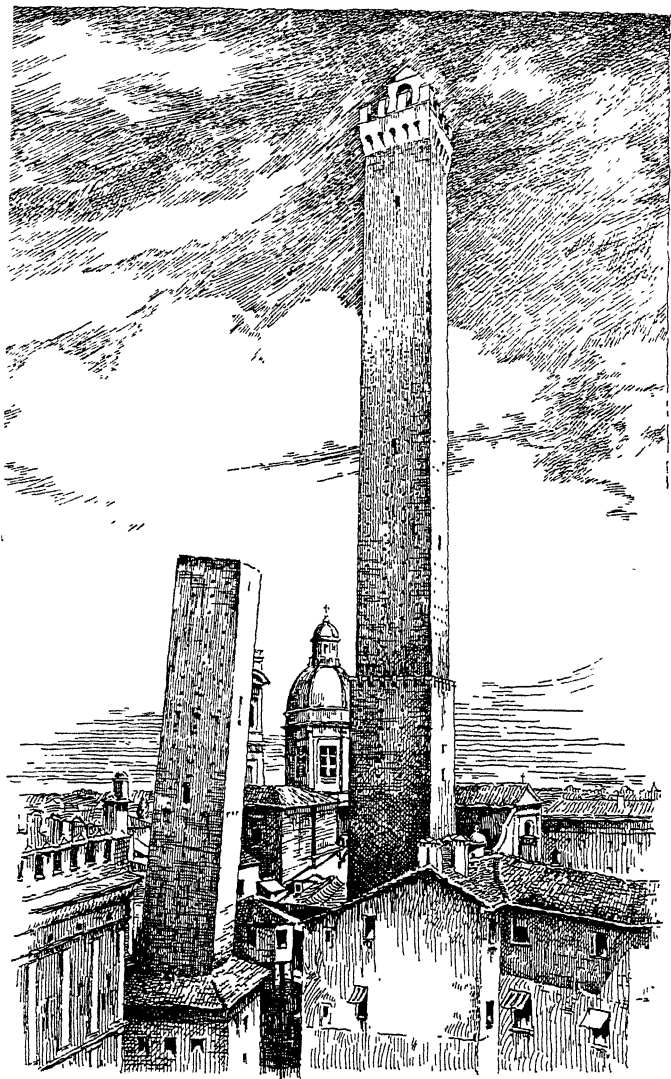
#### LETTER 14

ROME, *November 20th*, 1818.

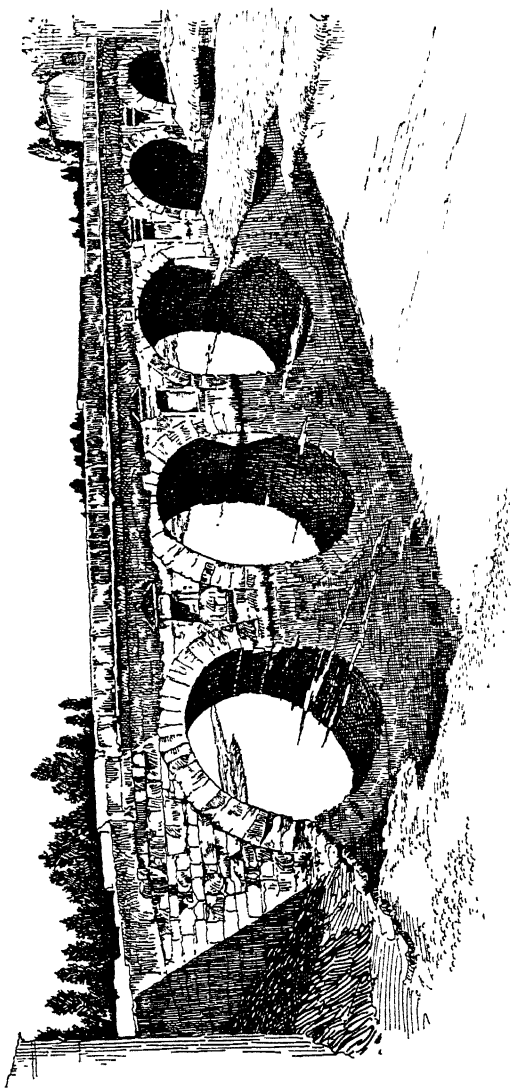
MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Behold me in the capital of the vanished world! But I have seen nothing except St. Peter's and the Vatican, overlooking the city in the mist of distance, and the Dogana, where they took us to have our luggage examined, which is built between the ruins of a temple to Antoninus Pius. The Corinthian columns rise over the dwindled palaces of the modern town, and the wrought cornice is changed on one side, as it were, to masses of wave-worn precipice, which overhang you, far, far on high.

I take advantage of this rainy evening, and before Rome has effaced all other recollections, to endeavour to recall the vanished



LEANING TOWERS AT BOLOGNA



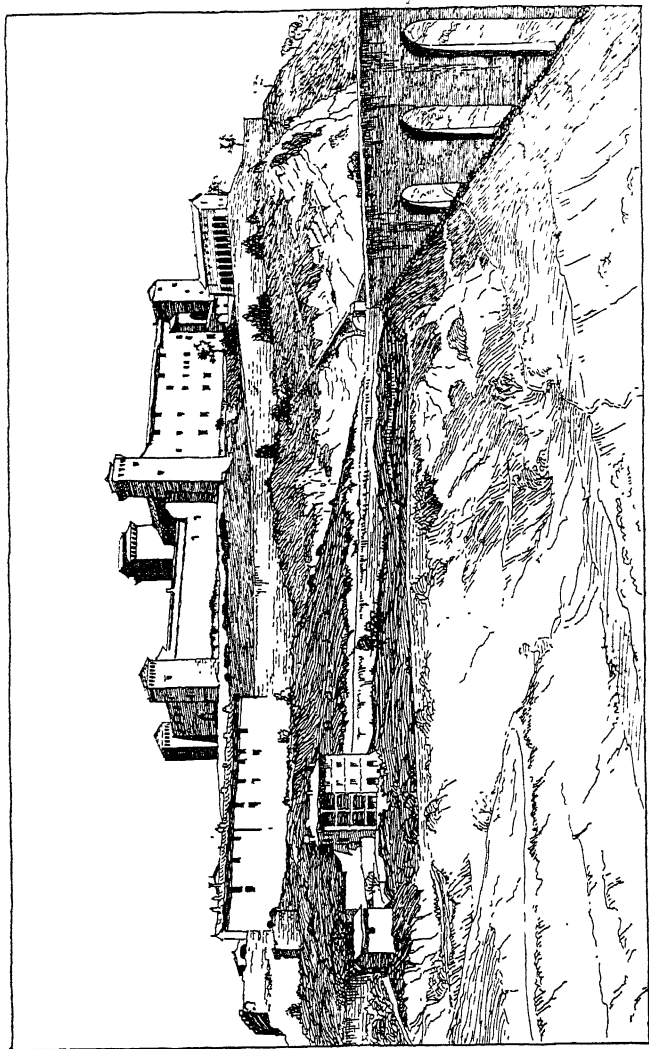
ROMAN BRIDGE AT RIMINI

scenes through which we have passed. We left Bologna, I forget on what day, and passing by Rimini, Fano, and Foligno, along the Via Flaminia and Terni, have arrived at Rome after ten days' somewhat tedious, but most interesting journey. The most remarkable things we saw were the Roman excavations in the rock, and the great waterfall of Terni. Of course you have heard that there are a Roman bridge and a triumphal arch at Rimini, and in what excellent taste they are built. The bridge is not unlike the Strand bridge, but more bold in proportion, and of course infinitely smaller. From Fano we left the coast of the Adriatic, and entered the Apennines, following the course of the Metaurus, the banks of which were the scene of the defeat of Asdrubal: and it is said (you can refer to the book) that Livy has given a very exact and animated description of it. I forget all about it, but shall look as soon as our boxes are opened. Following the river, the vale contracts, the banks of the river become steep and rocky, the forests of oak and ilex which overhang its emerald-coloured stream, cling to their abrupt precipices. About four miles from Fossombrone, the river forces for itself a passage between the walls and toppling precipices of the loftiest Apennines, which are here rifted to their base, and undermined by the narrow and tumultuous torrent. It was a cloudy morning, and we had no conception of the scene that awaited us. Suddenly the low clouds were struck by the clear north wind, and like curtains of the finest gauze, removed one by one, were drawn from before the mountain, whose heaven-cleaving pinnacles and black crags overhanging one another, stood at length defined in the light of day. The road runs parallel to the river, at a considerable height, and is carried through the mountain by a vaulted cavern. The marks of the chisel of the legionaries of the Roman Consul are yet evident.

We passed on day after day, until we came to Spoleto, I think the most romantic city I ever saw. There is here an aqueduct of astonishing elevation, which unites two rocky mountains—there is the path of a torrent below, whitening the green dell with its broad and barren track of stones, and above there is a castle, apparently of great strength and of tremendous magnitude, which overhangs the city, and whose marble bastions are perpendicular with the precipice. I never saw a more impressive picture; in which the shapes of nature are of the grandest order, but over which the creations of man, sublime from their antiquity and greatness, seem to predominate. The castle was built by Belisarius or Narses, I forget which, but was of that epoch.

From Spoleto we went to Terni, and saw the cataract of the Velino. The glaciers of Montanvert and the source of the Arveiron is the grandest spectacle I ever saw. This is the second. Imagine a river sixty feet in breadth, with a vast volume of waters, the outlet of a great lake among the higher mountains, falling 300 feet into a sightless gulf of snow-white vapour, which bursts up for ever and for ever from a circle of black crags, and thence leaping downwards, making<sup>1</sup> five or six other cataracts, each fifty or a hundred feet high, which exhibit, on a smaller scale, and with beautiful and sublime variety, the same appearances. But words (and far less could painting) will not express it. Stand upon the brink of the platform of cliff which is directly opposite. You see the ever-moving water stream down. It comes in thick and tawny folds, flaking off like solid snow gliding down a mountain. It does not seem hollow within, but without it is unequal, like the folding of linen thrown carelessly down; your eye follows it, and it is lost below; not in the black rocks which gird it around, but in its own foam and spray in the cloud-like vapours boiling up from below, which is not like rain, nor mist, nor spray, nor foam, but water, in a shape wholly unlike anything I ever saw before. It is as white as snow, but thick and impenetrable to the eye. The very imagination is bewildered in it. A thunder comes up from the abyss wonderful to hear; for, though it ever sounds, it is never the same, but, modulated by the changing motion, rises and falls intermittingly; we passed half an hour in one spot looking at it, and thought but a few minutes had gone by. The surrounding scenery is, in its kind, the loveliest and most sublime that can be conceived. In our first walk we passed through some olive groves, of large and ancient trees, whose hoary and twisted trunks leaned in all directions. We then crossed a path of orange trees by the river side, laden with their golden fruit, and came to a forest of ilex of a large size, whose evergreen and acorn-bearing boughs were intertwined over our winding path. Around, hemming in the narrow vale, were pinnacles of lofty mountains of pyramidal rock clothed with all evergreen plants and trees; the vast pine, whose feathery foliage trembled in the blue air, the ilex, that ancestral inhabitant of these mountains, the arbutus with its crimson-coloured fruit and glittering leaves. After an hour's walk, we came beneath the cataract of Terni, within the distance of half a mile; nearer you cannot approach, for the Nar, which has here its confluence with the Velino, bars

<sup>1</sup> 'making', Garnett: 'make', H. B. F.: 'made', M. S. and Rhys.



THE CASTLE AT SPOLETO





the passage. We then crossed the river formed by this confluence, over a narrow natural bridge of rock, and saw the cataract from the platform I first mentioned. We think of spending some time next year near this waterfall. The inn is very bad, or we should have stayed there longer.

We came from Terni last night to a place called Nepi, and to-day arrived at Rome across the much-belied Campagna di Roma, a place I confess infinitely to my taste. It is a flattering picture of Bagshot Heath. But then there are the Apennines on one side, and Rome and St. Peter's on the other, and it is intersected by perpetual dells clothed with arbutus and ilex.

Adieu—very faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 15

NAPLES, *December 22, 1818.*

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have received a letter from you here, dated November 1st; you see the reciprocation of letters from the term of our travels is more slow. I entirely agree with what you say about *Childe Harold*. The spirit in which it is written is, if insane, the most wicked and mischievous insanity that ever was given forth. It is a kind of obstinate and self-willed folly, in which he hardens himself. I remonstrated with him in vain on the tone of mind from which such a view of things alone arises. For its real root is very different from its apparent one. Nothing can be less sublime than the true source of these expressions of contempt and desperation. The fact is, that first, the Italian women with whom he associates, are perhaps the most contemptible of all who exist under the moon—the most ignorant, the most disgusting, the most bigoted; countesses smell so strongly of garlic, that an ordinary Englishman cannot approach them. Well, L. B. is familiar with the lowest sort of these women, the people his gondolieri pick up in the streets. He associates with wretches who seem almost to have lost the gait and physiognomy of man, and who do not scruple to avow practices which are not only not named, but I believe seldom even conceived in England. He says he disapproves, but he endures. He is heartily and deeply discontented with himself; and contemplating in the distorted mirror of his own thoughts the nature and the destiny of man, what can he behold but objects of contempt and despair? But

that he is a great poet, I think the address to Ocean<sup>1</sup> proves. And he has a certain degree of candour while you talk to him, but unfortunately it does not outlast your departure. No, I do not doubt, and, for his sake, I ought to hope, that his present career must end soon in some violent circumstance.

Since I last wrote to you, I have seen the ruins of Rome, the Vatican, St. Peter's, and all the miracles of ancient and modern art contained in that majestic city. The impression of it exceeds anything I have ever experienced in my travels. We stayed there only a week, intending to return at the end of February, and devote two or three months to its mines of inexhaustible contemplation, to which period I refer you for a minute account of it. We visited the Forum and the ruins of the Coliseum every day. The Coliseum is unlike any work of human hands I ever saw before. It is of enormous height and circuit, and the arches built of massy stones are piled on one another, and jut into the blue air, shattered into the forms of overhanging rocks. It has been changed by time into the image of an amphitheatre of rocky hills overgrown by the wild olive, the myrtle, and the fig-tree, and threaded by little paths, which wind among its ruined stairs and immeasurable galleries: the copsewood overshadows you as you wander through its labyrinths, and the wild weeds of this climate of flowers bloom under your feet. The arena is covered with grass, and pierces, like the skirts of a natural plain, the chasms of the broken arches around. But a small part of the exterior circumference remains—it is exquisitely light and beautiful; and the effect of the perfection of its architecture, adorned with ranges of Corinthian pilasters, supporting a bold cornice, is such as to diminish the effect of its greatness. The interior is all ruin. I can scarcely believe that when encrusted with Dorian marble and ornamented by columns of Egyptian granite, its effect could have been so sublime and so impressive as in its present state. It is open to the sky, and it was the clear and sunny weather of the end of November in this climate when we visited it, day after day.

Near it is the arch of Constantine, or rather the arch of Trajan; for the servile and avaricious senate of degraded Rome ordered that the monument of his predecessor should be demolished in order to dedicate one to the Christian reptile, who had crept among the blood of his murdered family to the supreme power. It is exquisitely beautiful and perfect. The Forum is

<sup>1</sup> Stanzas clxxxix-clxxxiv of the fourth canto, published early in 1818 of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*.

a plain in the midst of Rome, a kind of desert full of heaps of stones and pits, and though so near the habitations of men, is the most desolate place you can conceive. The ruins of temples stand in and around it, shattered columns and ranges of others complete, supporting cornices of exquisite workmanship, and vast vaults of shattered domes distinct with regular compartments, once filled with sculptures of ivory or brass. The temples of Jupiter, and Concord, and Peace, and the Sun, and the Moon, and Vesta, are all within a short distance of this spot. Behold the wrecks of what a great nation once dedicated to the abstractions of the mind! Rome is a city, as it were, of the dead, or rather of those who cannot die, and who survive the puny generations which inhabit and pass over the spot which they have made sacred to eternity. In Rome, at least in the first enthusiasm of your recognition of ancient time, you see nothing of the Italians. The nature of the city assists the delusion, for its vast and antique walls describe a circumference of sixteen miles, and thus the population is thinly scattered over this space, nearly as great as London. Wide wild fields are enclosed within it, and there are grassy lanes and copses winding among the ruins, and a great green hill, lonely and bare, which overhangs the Tiber. The gardens of the modern palaces are like wild woods of cedar, and cypress, and pine, and the neglected walks are overgrown with weeds. The English burying-place is a green slope near the walls, under the pyramidal tomb of Cestius, and is, I think, the most beautiful and solemn cemetery I ever beheld. To see the sun shining on its bright grass, fresh, when we first visited it, with the autumnal dews, and hear the whispering of the wind among the leaves of the trees which have overgrown the tomb of Cestius, and the soil which is stirring in the sun-warm earth, and to mark the tombs, mostly of women and young people who were buried there, one might, if one were to die, desire the sleep they seem to sleep. Such is the human mind, and so it peoples with its wishes vacancy and oblivion.

I have told you little about Rome; but I reserve the Pantheon, and St. Peter's, and the Vatican, and Raphael, for my return. About a fortnight ago I left Rome, and Mary and Claire followed in three days, for it was necessary to procure lodgings here without alighting at an inn. From my peculiar mode of travelling I saw little of the country, but could just observe that the wild beauty of the scenery and the barbarous ferocity of the inhabitants progressively increased. On entering Naples, the first circumstance that engaged my attention was an assassination.

A youth ran out of a shop, pursued by a woman with a bludgeon, and a man armed with a knife. The man overtook him, and with one blow in the neck laid him dead in the road. On my expressing the emotions of horror and indignation which I felt, a Calabrian priest, who travelled with me, laughed heartily, and attempted to quiz me, as what the English call a flat. I never felt such an inclination to beat any one. Heaven knows I have little power, but he saw that I looked extremely displeased, and was silent. This same man, a fellow of gigantic strength and stature, had expressed the most frantic terror of robbers on the road: he cried at the sight of my pistol, and it had been with great difficulty that the joint exertions of myself and the vetturino had quieted his hysterics.

But external nature in these delightful regions contrasts with and compensates for the deformity and degradation of humanity. We have a lodging divided from the sea by the royal gardens, and from our windows we see perpetually the blue waters of the bay, forever changing, yet forever the same, and encompassed by the mountainous island of Capreae, the lofty peaks which overhang Salerno, and the woody hill of Posilipo, whose promontories hide from us Misenum and the lofty isle Inarime,<sup>1</sup> which, with its divided summit, forms the opposite horn of the bay. From the pleasant walks of the garden we see Vesuvius; a smoke by day and a fire by night is seen upon its summit, and the glassy sea often reflects its light or shadow. The climate is delicious. We sit without a fire, with the windows open, and have almost all the productions of an English summer. The weather is usually like what Wordsworth calls 'the first fine day of March'; sometimes very much warmer, though perhaps it wants that 'each minute sweeter than before', which gives an intoxicating sweetness to the awakening of the earth from its winter's sleep in England. We have made two excursions, one to Baiæ and one to Vesuvius, and we propose to visit, successively, the islands, Paestum, Pompeii, and Beneventum.

We set off an hour after sunrise one radiant morning in a little boat; there was not a cloud in the sky, nor a wave upon the sea, which was so translucent that you could see the hollow caverns clothed with the glaucous sea-moss, and the leaves and branches of those delicate weeds that pave the unequal bottom of the water. As noon approached, the heat, and especially the light, became intense. We passed Posilipo, and came first to the eastern point of the bay of Puzzoli, which is

<sup>1</sup> The ancient name of Ischia. [M. S.]

within the great bay of Naples, and which again encloses that of Baiae. Here are lofty rocks and craggy islets, with arches and portals of precipice standing in the sea, and enormous caverns, which echoed faintly with the murmur of the languid tide. This is called La Scuola di Virgilio. We then went directly across to the promontory of Misenum, leaving the precipitous island of Nesida on the right. Here we were conducted to see the Mare Morto, and the Elysian fields; the spot on which Virgil places the scenery of the Sixth *Aeneid*. Though extremely beautiful, as a lake, and woody hills, and this divine sky must make it, I confess my disappointment. The guide showed us an antique cemetery, where the niches used for placing the cinerary urns of the dead yet remain. We then coasted the Bay of Baiae to the left, in which we saw many picturesque and interesting ruins; but I have to remark that we never disembarked but we were disappointed—while from the boat the effect of the scenery was inexpressibly delightful. The colours of the water and the air breathe over all things here the radiance of their own beauty. After passing the Bay of Baiae, and observing the ruins of its antique grandeur standing like rocks in the transparent sea under our boat, we landed to visit lake Avernus. We passed through the cavern of the Sibyl (not Virgil's Sybil) which pierces one of the hills which circumscribe the lake, and came to a calm and lovely basin of water, surrounded by dark woody hills, and profoundly solitary. Some vast ruins of the temple of Pluto stand on a lawny hill on one side of it, and are reflected in its windless mirror. It is far more beautiful than the Elysian fields—but there are all the materials for beauty in the latter, and the Avernus was once a chasm of deadly and pestilential vapours. About half a mile from Avernus, a high hill, called Monte Novo, was thrown up by volcanic fire.

Passing onward we came to Pozzoli, the ancient Dicaearchia, where there are the columns remaining of a temple to Serapis, and the wreck of an enormous amphitheatre, changed, like the Coliseum, into a natural hill of the overteeming vegetation. Here also is the Solfatara, of which there is a poetical description in the *Civil War* of Petronius, beginning: 'Est locus', and in which the verses of the poet are infinitely finer than what he describes, for it is not a very curious place. After seeing these things we returned by moonlight to Naples in our boat. What colours there were in the sky, what radiance in the evening star, and how the moon was encompassed by a light unknown to our regions!

Our next excursion was to Vesuvius. We went to Resina in a carriage, where Mary and I mounted mules, and Claire was carried in a chair on the shoulders of four men, much like a Member of Parliament after he has gained his election, and looking, with less reason, quite as frightened. So we arrived at the hermitage of San Salvador, where an old hermit, belted with rope, set forth the plates for our refreshment.

Vesuvius is, after the glaciers, the most impressive exhibition of the energies of nature I ever saw. It has not the immeasurable greatness, the overpowering magnificence, nor, above all, the radiant beauty of the glaciers; but it has all their character of tremendous and irresistible strength. From Resina to the hermitage you wind up the mountain, and cross a vast stream of hardened lava, which is an actual image of the waves of the sea, changed into hard black stone by enchantment. The lines of the boiling flood seem to hang in the air, and it is difficult to believe that the billows which seem hurrying down upon you are not actually in motion. This plain was once a sea of liquid fire. From the hermitage we crossed another vast stream of lava, and then went on foot up the cone—this is the only part of the ascent in which there is any difficulty, and that difficulty has been much exaggerated. It is composed of rocks of lava, and declivities of ashes; by ascending the former and descending the latter, there is very little fatigue. On the summit is a kind of irregular plain, the most horrible chaos that can be imagined; riven into ghastly chasms, and heaped up with tumuli of great stones and cinders, and enormous rocks blackened and calcined, which had been thrown from the volcano upon one another in terrible confusion. In the midst stands the conical hill from which volumes of smoke, and the fountains of liquid fire, are rolled forth forever. The mountain is at present in a slight state of eruption; and a thick heavy white smoke is perpetually rolled out, interrupted by enormous columns of an impenetrable black bituminous vapour, which is hurled up, fold after fold, into the sky with a deep hollow sound, and fiery stones are rained down from its darkness, and a black shower of ashes fell even where we sat. The lava, like the glacier, creeps on perpetually, with a crackling sound as of suppressed fire. There are several springs of lava; and in one place it rushes<sup>1</sup> precipitously over a high crag, rolling down the half-molten rocks and its own overhanging waves; a cataract of quivering fire. We approached the extremity of one of the rivers of lava; it is about twenty feet in

<sup>1</sup> So M. S. and Rhys; but Garnett and H. B. F. read 'gushes'

breadth and ten in height; and as the inclined plane was not rapid, its motion was very slow. We saw the masses of its dark exterior surface detach themselves as it moved, and betray the depth of the liquid flame. In the day the fire is but slightly seen; you only observe a tremulous motion in the air, and streams and fountains of white sulphurous smoke.

At length we saw the sun sink between Capreae and Inarime, and, as the darkness increased, the effect of the fire became more beautiful. We were, as it were, surrounded by streams and cataracts of the red and radiant fire; and in the midst, from the column of bituminous smoke shot up into the air, fell the vast masses of rock, white with the light of their intense heat, leaving behind them through the dark vapour trains of splendour. We descended by torch-light, and I should have enjoyed the scenery on my return, but they conducted me, I know not how, to the hermitage in a state of intense bodily suffering, the worst effect of which was spoiling the pleasure of Mary and Claire. Our guides on the occasion were complete savages. You have no idea of the horrible cries which they suddenly utter, no one knows why; the clamour, the vociferation, the tumult. Claire in her palanquin suffered most from it; and when I had gone on before, they threatened to leave her in the middle of the road, which they would have done had not my Italian servant promised them a beating, after which they became quiet. Nothing, however, can be more picturesque than the gestures and the physiognomies of these savage people. And when, in the darkness of night, they unexpectedly begin to sing in chorus some fragments of their wild but sweet national music, the effect is exceedingly fine.

Since I wrote this, I have seen the museum of this city. Such statues! There is a Venus; an ideal shape of the most winning loveliness. A Bacchus, more sublime than any living being. A Satyr, making love to a youth; in which the expressed life of the sculpture, and the inconceivable beauty of the form of the youth, overcome one's repugnance to the subject. There are multitudes of wonderfully fine statues found in Herculaneum and Pompeii. We are going to see Pompeii the first day that the sea is waveless. Herculaneum is almost filled up; no more excavations are made; the king bought the ground and built a palace upon it.

You don't see much of Hunt. I wish you could contrive to see him when you go to town, and ask him what he means to answer to Lord Byron's invitation. He has now an opportunity,

if he likes, of seeing Italy. What do you think of joining his party, and paying us a visit next year; I mean as soon as the reign of winter is dissolved? Write to me your thoughts upon this. I cannot express to you the pleasure it would give me to welcome such a party.

I have depression enough of spirits and not good health, though I believe the warm air of Naples does me good. We see absolutely no one here.

Adieu, my dear Peacock,

Affectionately your friend,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 16

NAPLES, *Jan. 26th*, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Your two letters arrived within a few days of each other, one being directed to Naples, and the other to Livorno. They are more welcome visitors to me than mine can be to you. I writing as from sepulchres, you from the habitations of men yet unburied; though the sexton, Castlereagh, after having dug their grave, stands with his spade in his hand, evidently doubting whether he will not be forced to occupy it himself. Your news about the bank-note trials is excellent good. Do I not recognize in it the influence of Cobbett? You don't tell me what occupies Parliament. I know you will laugh at my demand, and assure me that it is indifferent. Your pamphlet I want exceedingly to see. Your calculations in the letter are clear, but require much oral explanation. You know I am an infernal arithmetician. If none but me had contemplated 'lucentemque globum lunae, Titaniaque astra', the world would yet have doubted whether they were many hundred feet higher than the mountain tops.

In my accounts of pictures and things, I am more pleased to interest you than the many; and this is fortunate, because, in the first place, I have no idea of attempting the latter, and if I did attempt it, I should assuredly fail. A perception of the beautiful characterizes those who differ from ordinary men, and those who can perceive it would not buy enough to pay the printer. Besides, I keep no journal, and the only records of my voyage will be the letters I send you. The bodily fatigue of standing for hours in galleries exhausts me; I believe that I don't see half that I ought, on that account. And then we know



nobody, and the common Italians are so sullen and stupid, it's impossible to get information from them. At Rome, where the people seem superior to any in Italy, I cannot fail to stumble on something more. Oh, if I had health, and strength, and equal spirits, what boundless intellectual improvement might I not gather in this wonderful country! At present I write little else but poetry, and little of that. My first act of *Prometheus* is complete, and I think you would like it. I consider poetry very subordinate to moral and political science, and if I were well, certainly I would aspire to the latter, for I can conceive a great work, embodying the discoveries of all ages, and harmonizing the contending creeds by which mankind have been ruled. Far from me is such an attempt, and I shall be content, by exercising my fancy, to amuse myself, and perhaps some others, and cast what weight I can into the scale of that balance, which the Giant of Arthegall holds.<sup>1</sup>

Since you last heard from me, we have been to see Pompeii, and are waiting now for the return of spring weather, to visit, first, Paestum, and then the islands; after which we shall return to Rome. I was astonished at the remains of this city; I had no conception of anything so perfect yet remaining. My idea of the mode of its destruction was this: First, an earthquake shattered it, and unroofed almost all its temples, and split its columns; then a rain of light, small pumice-stones fell; then torrents of boiling water, mixed with ashes, filled up all its crevices. A wide, flat hill, from which the city was excavated, is now covered by thick woods, and you see the tombs and the theatres, the temples and the houses, surrounded by the uninhabited wilderness. We entered the town from the side towards the sea, and first saw two theatres; one more magnificent than the other, strewn with the ruins of the white marble which formed their seats and cornices, wrought with deep, bold sculpture. In the front, between the stage and the seats, is the

<sup>1</sup> The allusion is to the *Fairy Queen*, book v, canto 3. The Giant has scales, in which he professes to weigh right and wrong, and rectify the physical and moral evils which result from inequality of condition. Shelley once pointed out this passage to me, observing: 'Artegall argues with the Giant; the Giant has the best of the argument; Artegall's iron man knocks him over into the sea and drowns him. This is the usual way in which power deals with opinion'. I said: 'That was not the lesson which Spenser intended to convey'. 'Perhaps not,' he said; 'it is the lesson which he conveys to me. I am of the Giant's faction.'

In the same feeling, with respect to Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, he held that the Enchanter in the first canto was a true philanthropist, and the Knight of Arts and Industry in the second an oligarchical impostor overthrowing truth by power. [T. L. P.]

circular space occasionally occupied by the chorus. The stage is very narrow, but long, and divided from this space by a narrow enclosure parallel to it, I suppose for the orchestra. On each side are the consuls' boxes, and below, in the theatre at Herculaneum, were found two equestrian statues of admirable workmanship, occupying the same place as the great bronze lamps did at Drury Lane. The smallest of the theatres is said to have been comic, though I should doubt. From both you see, as you sit on the seats, a prospect of the most wonderful beauty.

You then pass through the ancient streets; they are very narrow, and the houses rather small, but all constructed on an admirable plan, especially for this climate. The rooms are built round a court, or sometimes two, according to the extent of the house. In the midst is a fountain, sometimes surrounded with a portico, supported on fluted columns of white stucco; the floor is paved with mosaic, sometimes wrought in imitation of vine leaves, sometimes in quaint figures, and more or less beautiful, according to the rank of the inhabitant. There were paintings on all, but most of them have been removed to decorate the royal museums. Little winged figures, and small ornaments of exquisite elegance, yet remain. There is an ideal life in the forms of these paintings of an incomparable loveliness, though most are evidently the work of very inferior artists. It seems as if, from the atmosphere of mental beauty which surrounded them, every human being caught a splendour not his own. In one house you see how the bedrooms were managed—a small sofa was built up, where the cushions were placed; two pictures, one representing Diana and Endymion, the other Venus and Mars, decorate the chamber; and a little niche, which contains the statue of a domestic god. The floor is composed of a rich mosaic of the rarest marbles, agate, jasper, and porphyry; it looks to the marble fountain and the snow-white columns, whose entablatures strew the floor of the portico they supported. The houses have only one story, and the apartments, though not large, are very lofty. A great advantage results from this, wholly unknown in our cities. The public buildings, whose ruins are now forests, as it were, of white fluted columns, and which then supported entablatures, loaded with sculptures, were seen on all sides over the roofs of the houses. This was the excellence of the ancients. Their private expenses were comparatively moderate; the dwelling of one of the chief senators of Pompeii is elegant indeed, and adorned with most beautiful

specimens of art, but small. But their public buildings are everywhere marked by the bold and grand designs of an unsparing magnificence. In the little town of Pompeii (it contained about twenty thousand inhabitants), it is wonderful to see the number and the grandeur of their public buildings. Another advantage, too, is that, in the present case, the glorious scenery around is not shut out, and that, unlike the inhabitants of the Cimmerian ravines of modern cities, the ancient Pompeians could contemplate the clouds and the lamps of heaven; could see the moon rise high behind Vesuvius, and the sun set in the sea, tremulous with an atmosphere of golden vapour, between Inarime and Misenum.

We next saw the temples. Of the temple of Aesculapius little remains but an altar of black stone, adorned with a cornice imitating the scales of a serpent. His statue, in terra-cotta, was found in the cell. The temple of Isis is more perfect. It is surrounded by a portico of fluted columns, and in the area around it are two altars, and many ceppi for statues; and a little chapel of white stucco, as hard as stone, of the most exquisite proportion; its panels are adorned with figures in bas-relief, slightly indicated, but of a workmanship the most delicate and perfect that can be conceived. They are Egyptian subjects, executed by a Greek artist, who has harmonized all the unnatural extravagances of the original conception into the supernatural loveliness of his country's genius. They scarcely touch the ground with their feet, and their wind-uplifted robes seem in the place of wings. The temple in the midst, raised on a high platform, and approached by steps, was decorated with exquisite paintings, some of which we saw in the museum at Portici. It is small, of the same materials as the chapel, with a pavement of mosaic, and fluted Ionic columns of white stucco, so white that it dazzles you to look at it.

Thence through other porticos and labyrinths of walls and columns (for I cannot hope to detail everything to you), we came to the Forum. This is a large square, surrounded by lofty porticos of fluted columns, some broken, some entire, their entablatures strewed under them. The temple of Jupiter, of Venus, and another temple, the Tribunal, and the Hall of Public Justice, with their forests of lofty columns, surround the Forum. Two pedestals or altars of an enormous size (for, whether they supported equestrian statues, or were the altars of the temple of Venus, before which they stand, the guide could not tell) occupy the lower end of the Forum. At the

upper end, supported on an elevated platform, stands the temple of Jupiter. Under the colonnade of its portico we sate, and pulled out our oranges, and figs, and bread, and medlars (sorry fare, you will say), and rested to eat. Here was a magnificent spectacle. Above and between the multitudinous shafts of the sun-shining columns was seen the sea, reflecting the purple heaven of noon above it, and supporting, as it were, on its line the dark lofty mountains of Sorrento, of a blue inexpressibly deep, and tinged towards their summits with streaks of new-fallen snow. Between was one small green island. To the right was Capreae, Inarime, Prochyta, and Misenum. Behind was the single summit of Vesuvius, rolling forth volumes of thick white smoke, whose foam-like column was sometimes darted into the clear dark sky, and fell in little streaks along the wind. Between Vesuvius and the nearer mountains, as through a chasm, was seen the main line of the loftiest Apennines, to the east. The day was radiant and warm. Every now and then we heard the subterranean thunder of Vesuvius; its distant deep peals seemed to shake the very air and light of day, which interpenetrated our frames, with the sullen and tremendous sound. This scene was what the Greeks beheld (Pompeii, you know, was a Greek city). They lived in harmony with nature; and the interstices of their incomparable columns were portals, as it were, to admit the spirit of beauty which animates this glorious universe to visit those whom it inspired. If such is Pompeii, what was Athens? What scene was exhibited from the Acropolis, the Parthenon, and the temples of Hercules, and Theseus, and the Winds? The islands and the Aegean sea, the mountains of Argolis, and the peaks of Pindus and Olympus, and the darkness of the Boeotian forests interspersed?

From the Forum we went to another public place; a triangular portico, half enclosing the ruins of an enormous temple. It is built on the edge of the hill overlooking the sea.  $\wedge$  That black point is the temple. In the apex of the triangle stands an altar and a fountain, and before the altar once stood the statue of the builder of the portico. Returning hence, and following the consular road, we came to the eastern gate of the city. The walls are of enormous strength, and inclose a space of three miles. On each side of the road beyond the gate are built the tombs. How unlike ours! They seem not so much hiding-places for that which must decay, as voluptuous chambers for immortal spirits. They are of marble, radiantly white; and two, especially beautiful, are loaded with exquisite bas-reliefs. On

the stucco-wall that encloses them are little emblematic figures, of a relief exceedingly low, of dead and dying animals, and little winged genii, and female forms bending in groups in some funeral office. The higher reliefs represent, one a nautical subject, and the other a Bacchanalian one. Within the cell stand the cinerary urns, sometimes one, sometimes more. It is said that paintings were found within; which are now, as has been everything movable in Pompeii, removed, and scattered about in royal museums. These tombs were the most impressive things of all. The wild woods surround them on either side; and along the broad stones of the paved road which divides them, you hear the late leaves of autumn shiver and rustle in the stream of the inconstant wind, as it were, like the step of ghosts. The radiance and magnificence of these dwellings of the dead, the white freshness of the scarcely finished marble, the impassioned or imaginative life of the figures which adorn them, contrast strangely with the simplicity of the houses of those who were living when Vesuvius overwhelmed them.

I have forgotten the amphitheatre, which is of great magnitude, though much inferior to the Coliseum. I now understand why the Greeks were such great poets: and, above all, I can account, it seems to me, for the harmony, the unity, the perfection, the uniform excellence, of all their works of art. They lived in a perpetual commerce with external nature, and nourished themselves upon the spirit of its forms. Their theatres were all open to the mountains and the sky. Their columns, the ideal types of a sacred forest, with its roof of interwoven tracery, admitted the light and wind; the odour and the freshness of the country penetrated the cities. Their temples were mostly upaithric; and the flying clouds, the stars, or the deep sky, were seen above. Oh, but for that series of wretched wars which terminated in the Roman conquest of the world; but for the Christian religion, which put the finishing stroke on the ancient system; but for those changes that conducted Athens to its ruin—to what an eminence might not humanity have arrived!

In a short time I hope to tell you something of the museum of this city.

You see how ill I follow the maxim of Horace, at least in its literal sense: 'nil admirari'—which I should say, 'prope res est una'—to prevent there ever being anything admirable in the world. Fortunately Plato is of my opinion; and I had rather err with Plato than be right with Horace.

At this moment I have received your letter, indicating that

you are moving to London. I am very much interested in the subject of this change, and beg you would write me all the particulars of it. You will be able now to give me perhaps a closer insight into the politics of the times than was permitted you at Marlow. Of H—— I have a very slight opinion. There are rumours here of a revolution in Spain. A ship came in twelve days from Catalonia, and brought a report that the king was massacred; that eighteen thousand insurgents surrounded Madrid; but that before the popular party gained head enough seven thousand were murdered by the Inquisition. Perhaps you know all by this time. The old king of Spain is dead here. Cobbett is a fine *ὑμενοποιος*—does his influence increase or diminish? What a pity that so powerful a genius should be combined with the most odious moral qualities.

We have reports here of a change in the English ministry—to what does it amount? for, besides my national interest in it, I am on the watch to vindicate my most sacred rights, invaded by the chancery court.

I suppose now we shall not see you in Italy this spring, whether Hunt comes or not. It's probable I shall hear nothing from him for some months, particularly if he does not come. Give me *ses nouvelles*.

I am under an English surgeon here, who says I have a disease of the liver, which he will cure. We keep horses, as this kind of exercise is absolutely essential to my health. Elise<sup>1</sup> has just married our Italian servant, and has quitted us; the man was a great rascal, and cheated enormously: this event was very much against our advice.

I have scarcely been out since I wrote last.

Adieu! yours most faithfully,

P. B. S.

## LETTER 17

NAPLES, February 25th, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I am much interested to hear your progress in the object of your removal to London, especially as I hear from Horace Smith of the advantages attending it. There is no person in the world who would more sincerely rejoice in any good fortune that might befall you than I should.

We are on the point of quitting Naples for Rome. The

<sup>1</sup> A Swiss girl whom we had engaged as nursery-maid two years before, at Geneva. [M. S.]

scenery which surrounds this city is more delightful than any within the immediate reach of civilized man. I don't think I have mentioned to you the Lago d'Agnano and the Caccia d'Ischieri, and I have since seen what obscures those lovely forms in my memory. They are both the craters of extinguished volcanoes, and nature has thrown forth forests of oak and ilex, and spread mossy lawns and clear lakes over the dead or sleeping fire. The first is a scene of a wider and milder character, with soft sloping, wooded hills, and grassy declivities declining to the lake, and cultivated plains of vines woven upon poplar trees, bounded by the theatre of hills. Innumerable wild water-birds, quite tame, inhabit this place. The other is a royal chace, is surrounded by steep and lofty hills, and only accessible through a wide gate of massy oak, from the vestibule of which the spectacle of precipitous hills, hemming in a narrow and circular vale, is suddenly disclosed. The hills are covered with thick woods of ilex, myrtle, and laurustinus; the polished leaves of the ilex, as they wave in their multitudes under the partial blasts which rush through the chasms of the vale, glitter above the dark masses of foliage below, like the white foam of waves upon a deep blue sea. The plain so surrounded is at most three miles in circumference. It is occupied partly by a lake, with bold shores wooded by evergreens, and interrupted by a sylvan promontory of the wild forest, whose mossy boughs overhang its expanse, of a silent and purple darkness, like an Italian midnight; and partly by the forest itself, of all gigantic trees, but the oak especially, whose jagged boughs, now leafless, are hoary with thick lichens, and loaded with the massy and deep foliage of the ivy. The effect of the dark eminences that surround this plain, seen through the boughs, is of an enchanting solemnity. (There we saw in one instance wild boars and a deer, and in another—a spectacle little suited to the antique and Latonian nature of the place—King Ferdinand in a winter enclosure, watching to shoot wild boars.) The underwood was principally evergreen, all lovely kinds of fern and furze; the cytissus, a delicate kind of furze with a pretty yellow blossom, the myrtle, and the myrica. The willow trees had just begun to put forth their green and golden buds, and gleamed like points of lambent fire among the wintry forest. The Grotta del Cane, too, we saw, because other people see it; but would not allow the dog to be exhibited in torture for our curiosity. The poor little animals <sup>1</sup>

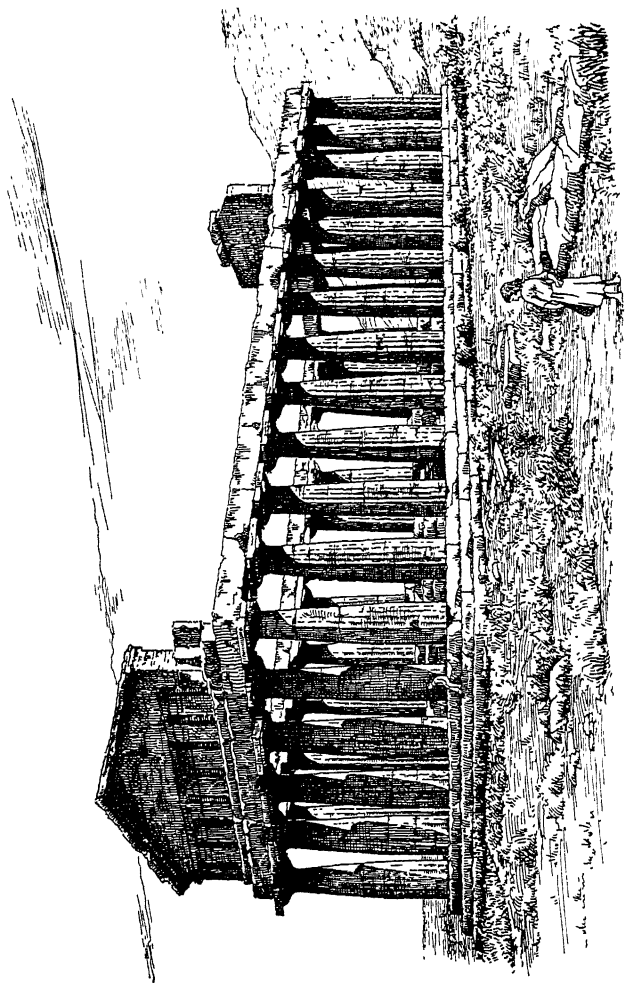
<sup>1</sup> Several dogs are kept for exhibition, but only one is exhibited at a time. [T. L. P.]

stood moving their tails in a slow and dismal manner, as if perfectly resigned to their condition—a cur-like emblem of voluntary servitude. The effect of the vapour, which extinguishes a torch, is to cause suffocation at last, through a process which makes the lungs feel as if they were torn by sharp points within. So a surgeon told us, who tried the experiment on himself.

There was a Greek city, sixty miles to the south of Naples, called Posidonia, now Pesto, where there still subsist three temples of Etruscan<sup>1</sup> architecture, still perfect. From this city we have just returned. The weather was most unfavourable for our expedition. After two months of cloudless serenity, it began raining cats and dogs. The first night we slept at Salerno, a large city situate in the recess of a deep bay; surrounded with stupendous mountains of the same name. A few miles from Torre del Greco we entered on the pass of the mountains, which is a line dividing the isthmus of those enormous piles of rock which compose the southern boundary of the Bay of Naples, and the northern one of that of Salerno. On one side is a lofty conical hill, crowned with the turrets of a ruined castle, and cut into platforms for cultivation; at least every ravine and glen, whose precipitous sides admitted of other vegetation but that of the rock-rooted ilex: on the other, the ethereal snowy crags of an immense mountain, whose terrible lineaments were at intervals concealed or disclosed by volumes of dense clouds rolling under the tempest. Half a mile from this spot, between orange and lemon groves of a lovely village, suspended as it were on an amphitheatral precipice, whose golden globes contrasted with the white walls and dark green leaves which they almost outnumbered, shone the sea. A burst of the declining sunlight illumined it. The road led along the brink of the precipice, towards Salerno. Nothing could be more glorious than the scene. The immense mountains covered with the rare and divine vegetation of this climate, with many-folding vales, and deep dark recesses which the fancy scarcely could penetrate, descended from their snowy summits precipitously to the sea. Before us was Salerno, built into a declining plain, between the mountains and the sea. Beyond, the other shore of sky-cleaving mountains, then dim with the mist of tempest. Underneath, from the base of the precipice where the road conducted, rocky promontories jutted into the sea, covered with olive and ilex woods, or with the ruined battlements of some

<sup>1</sup> The architecture is Doric. [T. L. P.]





TEMPLE OF CERES AT PESTO



Norman or Saracenic fortress. We slept at Salerno, and the next morning, before daybreak, proceeded to Posidonia. The night had been tempestuous, and our way lay by the sea sand. It was utterly dark, except when the long line of wave burst, with a sound like thunder, beneath the starless sky, and cast up a kind of mist of cold white lustre. When morning came, we found ourselves travelling in a wide desert plain, perpetually interrupted by wild irregular glens, and bounded on all sides by the Apennines and the sea. Sometimes it was covered with forest, sometimes dotted with underwood, or mere tufts of fern and furze, and the wintry dry tendrils of creeping plants. I have never, but in the Alps, seen an amphitheatre of mountains so magnificent. After travelling fifteen miles, we came to a river, the bridge of which had been broken, and which was so swollen that the ferry would not take the carriage across. We had, therefore, to walk seven miles of a muddy road, which led to the ancient city across the desolate Maremma. The air was scented with the sweet smell of violets of an extraordinary size and beauty. At length we saw the sublime and massy colonnades, skirting the horizon of the wilderness. We entered by the ancient gate, which is now no more than a chasm in the rock-like wall. Deeply sunk in the ground beside it were the ruins of a sepulchre, which the ancients were in the custom of building beside the public way. The first temple, which is the smallest, consists of an outer range of columns, quite perfect, and supporting a perfect architrave and two shattered frontispieces.<sup>1</sup> The proportions are extremely massy, and the architecture entirely unornamented and simple. These columns do not seem more than forty feet high,<sup>2</sup> but the perfect proportions diminish the apprehension of their magnitude; it seems as if inequality and irregularity of form were requisite to force on us the relative idea of greatness. The scene from between the columns of the temple consists on one side of the sea, to which the gentle hill on which it is built slopes, and on the other, of the grand amphitheatre of the loftiest Apennines, dark purple mountains, crowned with snow, and intersected there by long bars of hard and leaden-coloured cloud. The effect of the jagged outline of

<sup>1</sup> The three temples are amphiprostyle; that is, they have two prospects or fronts, each of six columns in the two first, and of nine in the Basilica. See Major's *Ruins of Paestum*. 1768. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> The height of the columns is respectively 18 feet 6 inches, and 28 feet 5 inches and 6½ lines, in the two first temples; and 21 feet 6 inches in the Basilica. This shows the justice of the remarks on the difference of real and apparent magnitude. [T. L. P.]

mountains, through groups of enormous columns on one side, and on the other the level horizon of the sea, is inexpressibly grand. The second temple is much larger, and also more perfect. Beside the outer range of columns, it contains an interior range of column above column, and the ruins of a wall which was the screen of the penetralia. With little diversity of ornament, the order of architecture is similar to that of the first temple. The columns in all are fluted, and built of a porous volcanic stone, which time has dyed with a rich and yellow colour. The columns are one-third larger, and like that of the first, diminish from the base to the capital, so that, but for the chastening effect of their admirable proportions, their magnitude would, from the delusion of perspective, seem greater, not less, than it is; though perhaps we ought to say, not that this symmetry diminishes your apprehension of their magnitude, but that it overpowers the idea of relative greatness, by establishing within itself a system of relations destructive of your idea of its relation with other objects, on which our ideas of size depend. The third temple is what they call a Basilica; three columns alone remain of the interior range; the exterior is perfect, but that the cornice and frieze in many places have fallen. This temple covers more ground than either of the others, but its columns are of an intermediate magnitude between those of the second and the first.

We only contemplated these sublime monuments for two hours, and of course could only bring away so imperfect a conception of them as is the shadow of some half-remembered dream.

✱ The royal collection of paintings in this city is sufficiently miserable. Perhaps the most remarkable is the original studio by Michael Angelo, of the 'Day of Judgement', which is painted in fresco on the Sixtine chapel of the Vatican. It is there so defaced as to be wholly indistinguishable. I cannot but think the genius of this artist highly overrated. He has not only no temperance, no modesty, no feeling for the just boundaries of art (and in these respects an admirable genius may err), but he has no sense of beauty, and to want this is to want the sense of the creative power of mind. What is terror without a contrast with, and a connection with, loveliness. How well Dante understood this secret—Dante, with whom this artist has been so presumptuously compared! What a thing his 'Moses' is; how distorted from all that is natural and majestic, only less monstrous and detestable than its historical prototype. In the

picture to which I allude, God is leaning out of heaven, as it were eagerly enjoying the final scene of the infernal tragedy he set the Universe to act. The Holy Ghost, in the shape of a dove, is under him. Under the Holy Ghost stands Jesus Christ, in an attitude of haranguing the assembly. This figure, which his subject, or rather the view which it became him to take of it, ought to have modelled of a calm, severe, awe-inspiring majesty, terrible yet lovely, is in the attitude of commonplace resentment. On one side of this figure are the elect; on the other, the host of heaven; they ought to have been what the Christians call *glorified bodies*, floating onward and radiant with that everlasting light (I speak in the spirit of their faith), which had consumed their mortal veil. They are in fact very ordinary people. Below is the ideal purgatory, I imagine, in mid-air, in the shapes of spirits, some of whom demons are dragging down, others falling as it were by their own weight, others half suspended in that Mahomet-coffin kind of attitude which most moderate Christians, I believe, expect to assume. Every step towards hell approximates to the region of the artist's exclusive power. There is great imagination in many of the situations of these unfortunate spirits. But hell and death are his real sphere. The bottom of the picture is divided by a lofty rock, in which there is a cavern whose entrance is thronged by devils, some coming in with spirits, some going out for prey. The blood-red light of the fiery abyss glows through their dark forms. On one side are the devils in all hideous forms, struggling with the damned, who have received their sentence at the redeemer's throne, and chained in all forms of agony by knotted serpents, and writhing on the crags in every variety of torture. On the other, are the dead coming out of their graves—horrible forms. Such is the famous 'Day of Judgement' of Michael Angelo; a kind of *Titus Andronicus* in painting, but the author surely no Shakespeare. The other paintings are one or two of Raphael or his pupils, very sweet and lovely. A 'Danae' of Titian, a picture, the softest and most voluptuous form, with languid and uplifted eyes, and warm yet passive limbs. A 'Maddelena', by Guido, with dark brown hair, and dark brown eyes, and an earnest, soft, melancholy look. And some excellent pictures, in point of execution, by Annibal Carracci. None others worth a second look. Of the gallery of statues I cannot speak. They require a volume, not a letter. Still less what can I do at Rome?

I have just seen the *Quarterly* for September (not from my own box). I suppose there is no chance now of your organizing

a review! This is a great pity. The *Quarterly* is undoubtedly conducted with talent, great talent, and affords a dreadful preponderance against the cause of improvement. If a band of staunch reformers, resolute yet skilful infidels, were united in so close and constant a league<sup>1</sup> as that in which interest and fanaticism have bound the members of that literary coalition!

Adieu. Address your next letter to Rome, whence you shall hear from me soon again. Mary and Clara unite with me in the very kindest remembrances. Most faithfully yours,

P. B. S.

A doctor here has been messing me, and I believe has done me an important benefit. One of his pretty schemes has been putting caustic on my side. You may guess how much quiet I have had since it was laid on. . . .

## LETTER 18

ROME, *March 23rd*, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I wrote to you the day before our departure from Naples. We came by slow journeys, with our own horses, to Rome, resting one day at Mola di Gaeta, at the inn called Villa di Cicerone, from being built on the ruins of his Villa, whose immense substructions overhang the sea, and are scattered among the orange-groves. Nothing can be lovelier than the scene from the terraces of the inn. On one side precipitous mountains, whose bases slope into an inclined plane of olive and orange-copses—the latter forming, as it were, an emerald sky of leaves, starred with innumerable globes of their ripening fruit, whose rich splendour contrasted with the deep green foliage; on the other the sea—bounded on one side by the antique town of Gaeta, and the other by what appears to be an island, the promontory of Circe. From Gaeta to Terracina the whole scenery is of the most sublime character. At Terracina precipitous conical crags of immense height shoot into the sky and overhang the sea. At Albano we arrived again in sight of Rome. Arches after arches in unending lines stretching across the uninhabited wilderness, the blue defined line of the mountains seen between them; masses of nameless ruin standing like rocks out of the plain; and the

<sup>1</sup> This was the idea which was subsequently intended to be carried out in the *Liberal*. [T. L. P.]

plain itself, with its billowy and unequal surface, announced the neighbourhood of Rome. And what shall I say to you of Rome? If I speak of the inanimate ruins, the rude stones piled upon stones, which are the sepulchres of the fame of those who once arrayed them with the beauty which has faded, will you believe me insensible to the vital, the almost breathing creations of genius yet subsisting in their perfection? What has become, you will ask, of the Apollo, the Gladiator, the Venus of the Capitol? What of the Apollo di Belvedere, the Laocoön? What of Raphael and Guido? These things are best spoken of when the mind has drunk in the spirit of their forms; and little indeed can I, who must devote no more than a few months to the contemplation of them, hope to know or feel of their profound beauty.

I think I told you of the Coliseum, and its impressions on me on my first visit to this city. The next most considerable relic of antiquity, considered as a ruin, is the *Thermae* of Caracalla. These consist of six enormous chambers, above 200 feet in height, and each enclosing a vast space like that of a field. There are, in addition, a number of towers and labyrinthine recesses, hidden and woven over by the wild growth of weeds and ivy. Never was any desolation more sublime and lovely. The perpendicular wall of ruin is cloven into steep ravines filled up with flowering shrubs, whose thick twisted roots are knotted in the rifts of the stones. At every step the aerial pinnacles of shattered stone group into new combinations of effect, and tower above the lofty yet level walls, as the distant mountains change their aspect to one travelling rapidly along the plain. The perpendicular walls resemble nothing more than that cliff of Bisham wood, that is overgrown with wood, and yet is stony and precipitous—you know the one I mean; not the chalk-pit, but the spot that has the pretty copse of fir-trees and privet-bushes at its base, and where H—— and I scrambled up, and you, to my infinite discontent, would go home. These walls surround green and level spaces of lawn, on which some elms have grown, and which are interspersed towards their skirts by masses of the fallen ruin, overtwin'd with the broad leaves of the creeping weeds. The blue sky canopies it, and is as the everlasting roof of these enormous halls.

But the most interesting effect remains. In one of the buttresses, that supports an immense and lofty arch, which ‘bridges the very winds of heaven’, are the crumbling remains of an antique winding staircase, whose sides are open in many

places to the precipice. This you ascend, and arrive on the summit of these piles. There grow on every side thick entangled wildernesses of myrtle, and the myrletus, and bay, and the flowering laurestinus, whose white blossoms are just developed, the white fig, and a thousand nameless plants sown by the wandering winds. These woods are intersected on every side by paths, like sheep-tracks through the copse-wood of steep mountains, which wind to every part of the immense labyrinth. From the midst rise those pinnacles and masses, themselves like mountains, which have been seen from below. In one place you wind along a narrow strip of weed-grown ruin: on one side is the immensity of earth and sky, on the other a narrow chasm, which is bounded by an arch of enormous size, fringed by the many-coloured foliage and blossoms, and supporting a lofty and irregular pyramid, overgrown like itself with the all-prevailing vegetation. Around rise other crags and other peaks, all arrayed, and the deformity of their vast desolation softened down, by the undecaying investiture of nature. Come to Rome. It is a scene by which expression is overpowered; which words cannot convey. Still further, winding up one-half of the shattered pyramids, by the path through the blooming copse-wood, you come to a little mossy lawn, surrounded by the wild shrubs; it is overgrown with anemones, wallflowers, and violets, whose stalks pierce the starry moss, and with radiant blue flowers, whose names I know not, and which scatter through the air the divinest odour, which, as you recline under the shade of the ruin, produces sensations of voluptuous faintness, like the combinations of sweet music. The paths still wind on, threading the perplexed windings, other labyrinths, other lawns, and deep dells of wood, and lofty rocks, and terrific chasms. When I tell you that these ruins cover several acres, and that the paths above penetrate at least half their extent, your imagination will fill up all that I am unable to express of this astonishing scene.

I speak of these things not in the order in which I visited them, but in that of the impression which they made on me, or perhaps chance directs. The ruins of the ancient Forum are so far fortunate that they have not been walled up in the modern city. They stand in an open, lonesome place, bounded on one side by the modern city, and the other by the Palatine Mount, covered with shapeless masses of ruin. The tourists tell you all about these things, and I am afraid of stumbling on their language when I enumerate what is so well known. There remain eight granite columns of the Ionic order, with their entablature, of the



temple of Concord, founded by Camillus. I fear that the immense expense demanded by these columns forbids us to hope that they are the remains of any edifice dedicated by that most perfect and virtuous of men. It is supposed to have been repaired under the Eastern Emperors; alas, what a contrast of recollections! Near them stand three Corinthian fluted columns, which supported the angle of a temple; the architrave and entablature are worked with delicate sculpture. Beyond, to the south, is another solitary column; and still more distant, three more, supporting the wreck of an entablature. Descending from the Capitol to the Forum, is the triumphal arch of Septimius Severus, less perfect than that of Constantine, though from its proportions and magnitude a most impressive monument. That of Constantine, or rather of Titus (for the relief and sculpture, and even the colossal images of Dacian captives, were torn by a decree of the senate from an arch dedicated to the latter, to adorn that of this stupid and wicked monster, Constantine, one of whose chief merits consists in establishing a religion, the destroyer of those arts which would have rendered so base a spoliation unnecessary), is the most perfect. It is an admirable work of art. It is built of the finest marble, and the outline of the reliefs is in many parts as perfect as if just finished. Four Corinthian fluted columns support, on each side, a bold entablature, whose bases are loaded with reliefs of captives in every attitude of humiliation and slavery. The compartments above express in bolder relief the enjoyment of success; the conqueror on his throne, or in his chariot, or nodding over the crushed multitudes, who writhe under his horses' hoofs, as those below express the torture and abjectness of defeat. There are three arches, whose roofs are panelled with fretwork, and their sides adorned with similar reliefs. The keystone of these arches is supported each by two winged figures of Victory, whose hair floats on the wind of their own speed, and whose arms are outstretched, bearing trophies, as if impatient to meet. They look, as it were, borne from the subject extremities of the earth, on the breath which is the exhalation of that battle and desolation, which it is their mission to commemorate. Never were monuments so completely fitted to the purpose for which they were designed, of expressing that mixture of energy and error which is called a triumph.

I walk forth in the purple and golden light of an Italian evening, and return by star or moonlight, through this scene. The elms are just budding, and the warm spring winds bring

unknown odours, all sweet, from the country. I see the radiant Orion through the mighty columns of the temple of Concord, and the mellow fading light softens down the modern buildings of the Capitol, the only ones that interfere with the sublime desolation of the scene. On the steps of the Capitol itself, stand two colossal statues of Castor and Pollux, each with his horse, finely executed, though far inferior to those of Monte Cavallo, the cast of one of which you know we saw together in London. This walk is close to our lodging, and this is my evening walk.

What shall I say of the modern city? Rome is yet the capital of the world. It is a city of palaces and temples, more glorious than those which any other city contains, and of ruins more glorious than they. Seen from any of the eminences that surround it, it exhibits domes beyond domes, and palaces, and colonnades interminably, even to the horizon; interspersed with patches of desert, and mighty ruins which stand girt by their own desolation, in the midst of the fanes of living religions and the habitations of living men, in sublime loneliness. St. Peter's is, as you have heard, the loftiest building in Europe. Externally it is inferior in architectural beauty to St. Paul's, though not wholly devoid of it; internally it exhibits littleness on a large scale, and is in every respect opposed to antique taste. You know my propensity to admire; and I tried to persuade myself out of this opinion—in vain; the more I see of the interior of St. Peter's, the less impression as a whole does it produce on me. I cannot even think it lofty, though its dome is considerably higher than any hill within fifty miles of London; and when one reflects, it is an astonishing monument of the daring energy of man. Its colonnade is wonderfully fine, and there are two fountains, which rise in spire-like columns of water to an immense height in the sky, and falling on the porphyry vases from which they spring, fill the whole air with a radiant mist, which at noon is thronged with innumerable rainbows. In the midst stands an obelisk. In front is the palace-like façade of St. Peter's, certainly magnificent; and there is produced, on the whole, an architectural combination unequalled in the world. But the dome of the temple is concealed, except at a very great distance, by the façade and the inferior part of the building, and that diabolical contrivance they call an attic.

The effect of the Pantheon is totally the reverse of that of St. Peter's. Though not a fourth part of the size, it is, as it were, the visible image of the universe; in the perfection of its

proportions, as when you regard the unmeasured dome of heaven, the idea of magnitude is swallowed up and lost. It is open to the sky, and its wide dome is lighted by the ever-changing illumination of the air. The clouds of noon fly over it, and at night the keen stars are seen through the azure darkness, hanging immovably, or driving after the driving moon among the clouds. We visited it by moonlight; it is supported by sixteen columns, fluted and Corinthian, of a certain rare and beautiful yellow marble, exquisitely polished, called here *giallo antico*. Above these are the niches for the statues of the twelve gods. This is the only defect of this sublime temple; there ought to have been no interval between the commencement of the dome and the cornice, supported by the columns. Thus there would have been no diversion from the magnificent simplicity of its form. This improvement is alone wanting to have completed the unity of the idea.

The fountains of Rome are, in themselves, magnificent combinations of art, such as alone it were worth coming to see. That in the Piazza Navona, a large square, is composed of enormous fragments of rock, piled on each other, and penetrated, as by caverns. This mass supports an Egyptian obelisk of immense height. On the four corners of the rock recline, in different attitudes, colossal figures representing the four divisions of the globe. The water bursts from the crevices beneath them. They are sculptured with great spirit; one impatiently tearing a veil from his eyes; another with his hands stretched upwards. The Fontana di Trevi is the most celebrated, and is rather a waterfall than a fountain; gushing out from masses of rock, with a gigantic figure of Neptune; and below are two river gods, checking two winged horses, struggling up from among the rocks and waters. The whole is not ill-conceived nor executed; but you know not how delicate the imagination becomes by dieting with antiquity day after day! The only things that sustain the comparison are Raphael, Guido, and Salvator Rosa.

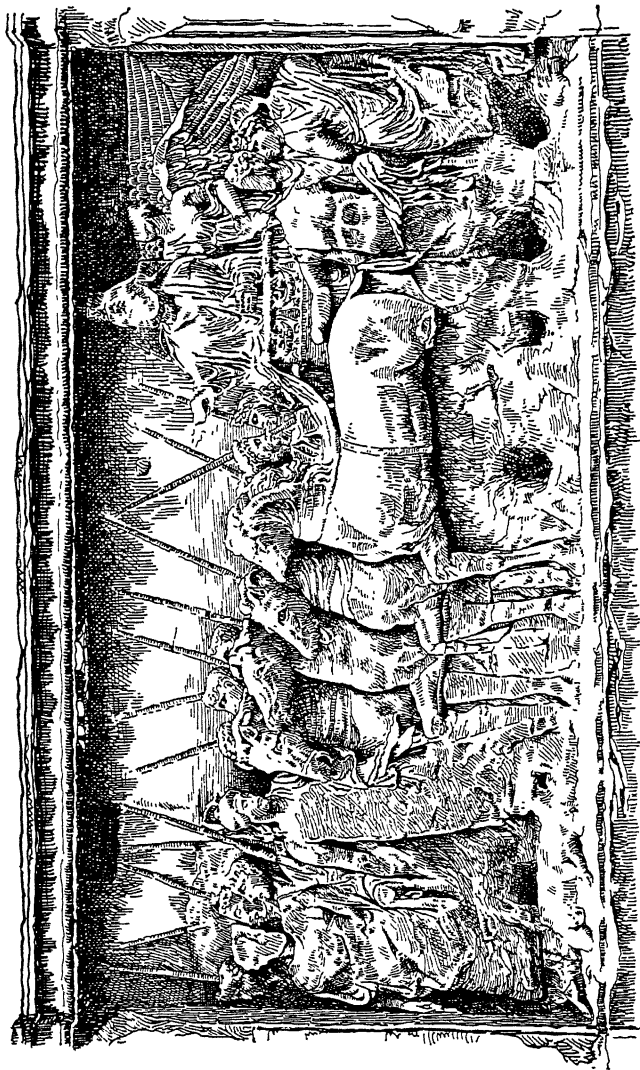
The fountain on the Quirinal, or rather the group formed by the statues, obelisk, and the fountain, is, however, the most admirable of all. From the Piazza Quirinale, or rather Monte Cavallo, you see the boundless ocean of domes, spires, and columns, which is the City, Rome. On a pedestal of white marble rises an obelisk of red granite, piercing the blue sky. Before it is a vast basin of porphyry, in the midst of which rises a column of the purest water, which collects into itself all the overhanging colours of the sky, and breaks them into a thousand prismatic

hues and graduated shadows—they fall together with its dashing water-drops into the outer basin. The elevated situation of this fountain produces, I imagine, this effect of colour. On each side, on an elevated pedestal, stand the statues of Castor and Pollux, each in the act of taming his horse, which are said, but I believe wholly without authority, to be the work of Phidias and Praxiteles. These figures combine the irresistible energy with the sublime and perfect loveliness supposed to have belonged to their divine nature. The reins no longer exist, but the position of their hands and the sustained and calm command of their regard, seem to require no mechanical aid to enforce obedience. The countenances at so great a height are scarcely visible, and I have a better idea of that of which we saw a cast together in London, than of the other. But the sublime and living majesty of their limbs and mien, the nervous and fiery animation of the horses they restrain, seen in the blue sky of Italy, and overlooking the city of Rome, surrounded by the light and the music of that crystalline fountain, no cast can communicate.

These figures were found at the Baths of Constantine, but, of course, are of remote antiquity. I do not acquiesce however in the practice of attributing to Phidias, or Praxiteles, or Scopas, or some great master, any admirable work that may be found. We find little of what remained, and perhaps the works of these were such as greatly surpassed all that we conceive of most perfect and admirable in what little has escaped the *deluge*. If I am too jealous of the honour of the Greeks, our masters, and creators, the gods whom we should worship—pardon me.

I have said what I feel without entering into any critical discussions of the *ruins* of Rome, and the mere outside of this inexhaustible mine of thought and feeling. Hobhouse, Eustace, and Forsyth, will tell all the show-knowledge about it—‘the common stuff of the earth’. By the by, Forsyth is worth reading, as I judge from a chapter or two I have seen. I cannot get the book here.

I ought to have observed that the central arch of the triumphal arch of Titus yet subsists, more perfect in its proportions, they say, than any of a later date. This I did not remark. The figures of Victory, with unfolded wings, and each spurning back a globe with outstretched feet, are, perhaps, more beautiful than those on either of the others. Their lips are parted: a delicate mode of indicating the fervour of their desire to arrive at the destined resting-place, and to express the eager respiration of their speed. Indeed, so essential to beauty were the



RELIEF ON THE ARCH OF TITUS, ROME



forms expressive of the exercise of the imagination and the affections considered by *Greek* artists, that no ideal figure of antiquity, not destined to some representation directly exclusive of such a character, is to be found with closed lips. Within this arch are two panelled alto-relievos, one representing a train of people bearing in procession the instruments of Jewish worship, among which is the holy candlestick with seven branches; on the other, Titus standing in a quadriga, with a winged Victory. The grouping of the horses, and the beauty, correctness, and energy of their delineation, is remarkable, though they are much destroyed.

## LETTER 19

ROME, *April 6th*, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I sent you yesterday a long letter, all about antique Rome, which you had better keep for some leisure day. I received yours, and one of Hunt's, yesterday.—So, you know the B——s? I could not help considering Mrs. B.,<sup>1</sup> when I knew her, as the most admirable specimen of a human being I had ever seen. Nothing earthly ever appeared to me more perfect than her character and manners. It is improbable that I shall ever meet again the person whom I so much esteemed, and still admire. I wish, however, that when you see her, you would tell her that I have not forgotten her, nor any of the amiable circle once assembled round her; and that I desired such remembrances to her as an exile and a *Pariah* may be permitted to address to an acknowledged member of the community of mankind. I hear they dined at your lodgings. But no mention of A—— and his wife—where were they? C——,<sup>2</sup> though so young when I saw her, gave indications of her mother's excellencies; and, certainly less fascinating, is, I doubt not, equally amiable, and more sincere. It was hardly possible for a person of the extreme subtlety and delicacy of Mrs. B——'s understanding and affections, to be quite sincere and constant.

I am all anxiety about your I. H.<sup>3</sup> affair. There are few who will feel more hearty satisfaction at your success, in this or any other enterprise, than I shall. Pray let me have the earliest intelligence.

When shall I return to England? The Pythia has ascended

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. de Boinville.<sup>2</sup> Cornelia.<sup>3</sup> India House.

the tripod, but she replies not. Our present plans—and I know not what can induce us to alter them—lead us back to Naples in a month or six weeks, where it is almost decided that we should remain until the commencement of 1820. You may imagine, when we receive such letters as yours and Hunt's, what this resolution costs us—but these are not our only communications from England. My health is materially better. My spirits, not the most brilliant in the world; but that we attribute to our solitary situation, and, though happy, how should I be lively? We see something of Italian society indeed. The Romans please me much, especially the women, who, though totally devoid of every kind of information, or culture of the imagination, or affections, or understanding—and, in this respect, a kind of gentle savages—yet contrive to be interesting. Their extreme innocence and *naïveté*, the freedom and gentleness of their manners; the total absence of affectation, makes an intercourse with them very like an intercourse with uncorrupted children, whom they resemble in loveliness as well as simplicity. I have seen two women in society here of the highest beauty; their brows and lips, and the moulding of the face modelled with sculptural exactness, and the dark luxuriance of their hair floating over their fine complexions—and the lips—you must hear the commonplaces which escape from them, before they cease to be dangerous. The only inferior part are the eyes, which, though good and gentle, want the mazy depth of colour behind colour, with which the intellectual women of England and Germany entangle the heart in soul-inwoven labyrinths.

This is holy week, and Rome is quite full. The Emperor of Austria is here, and Maria Louisa is coming. On their journey through the other cities of Italy, she was greeted with loud acclamations, and vivas of Napoleon. Idiots and slaves! Like the frogs in the fable, because they are discontented with the log, they call upon the stork, who devours them. Great festas, and magnificent funzioni here—we cannot get tickets to all. There are five thousand strangers in Rome, and only room for five hundred at the celebration of the famous Miserere, in the Sixtine chapel, the only thing I regret we shall not be present at. After all, Rome is eternal, and were all that *is* extinguished, that which *has been*, the ruins and the sculptures, would remain, and Raphael and Guido be alone regretted.

In the square of St. Peter's there are about three hundred fettered criminals at work, hoeing out the weeds that grow between the stones of the pavement. Their legs are heavily



ironed, and some are chained two by two. They sit in long rows, hoeing out the weeds, dressed in parti-coloured clothes. Near them sit or saunter groups of soldiers, armed with loaded muskets. The iron discord of those innumerable chains clanks up into the sonorous air, and produces, contrasted with the musical dashing of the fountains, and the deep azure beauty of the sky, and the magnificence of the architecture around, a conflict of sensations allied to madness. It is the emblem of Italy—moral degradation contrasted with the glory of nature and the arts.

We see no English society here; it is not probable that we could if we desired it, and I am certain that we should find it insupportable. The manners of the rich English are wholly insupportable, and they assume pretensions which they would not venture upon in their own country. I am yet ignorant of the event of Hobhouse's election. I saw the last numbers were—Lamb, 4,200; and Hobhouse, 3,900—14th day. There is little hope. That mischievous Cobbett has divided and weakened the interest of the popular party, so that the factions that prey upon our country have been able to coalesce to its exclusion. The N——s<sup>1</sup> you have not seen. I am curious to know what kind of a girl Octavia becomes; she promised well. Tell H——his Melpomene is in the Vatican, and that her attitude and drapery surpass, if possible, the graces of her countenance.

My *Prometheus Unbound* is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts. By the by, have you seen Ollier? I never hear from him, and am ignorant whether some verses I sent him from Naples, entitled, I think, *Lines on the Euganean Hills*, have reached him in safety or not. As to the Reviews, I suppose there is nothing but abuse; and this is not hearty or sincere enough to amuse me. As to the poem now printing,<sup>2</sup> I lay no stress on it one way or the other. The concluding lines are natural.

I believe, my dear Peacock, that you wish us to come back to England. How is it possible? Health, competence, tranquillity—all these Italy permits, and England takes away. I am regarded by all who know or hear of me, except, I think, on the whole, five individuals, as a rare prodigy of crime and pollution, whose look even might infect. This is a large computation, and I don't think I could mention more

<sup>1</sup> Newtons.

<sup>2</sup> *Rosalind and Helen*.

than three. Such is the spirit of the English abroad as well as at home.<sup>1</sup>

Few compensate, indeed, for all the rest, and if I were *alone* I should laugh; or if I were rich enough to do all things, which I shall never be. Pity me for my absence from those social enjoyments which England might afford me, and which I know so well how to appreciate. Still, I shall return some fine morning, out of pure weakness of heart.

My dear Peacock, most faithfully yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 20

ROME, *June 8th*, 1819.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Yesterday, after an illness of only a few days, my little William died. There was no hope from the moment of the attack. You will be kind enough to tell all my friends, so that I need not write to them. It is a great exertion to me to write this, and it seems to me as if, hunted by calamity as I have been, that I should never recover any cheerfulness again.

If the things Mary desired to be sent to Naples have not been shipped, send them to Livorno.

We leave this city for Livorno to-morrow morning, where we have written to take lodgings for a month. I will then write again.

Yours ever affectionately,

P. B. SHELLEY.

<sup>1</sup> These expressions show how keenly Shelley felt the calumnies heaped on him during his life. The very exaggeration of which he is guilty, is a clue to much of his despondency. His seclusion from society resulted greatly from his extreme ill-health, and his dislike of strangers and numbers, as well as the system of domestic economy which his lavish benevolence forced us to restrict within narrow bounds. In justice to our countrymen, I must mention that several distinguished for intellectual eminence, among them, Frederic Earl of Guildford and Sir William Drummond, called on him at Rome. Accident at the time prevented him from cultivating their acquaintance—the death of our son, and our subsequent retirement at Pisa, shut us out still more from the world. I confess that the insolence of some of the more vulgar among the travelling English, rendered me anxious that Shelley should be more willing to extend his acquaintance among the better sort, but his health was an insuperable bar. [M. S.]

## LETTER 21

LIVORNO, June—<sup>1</sup>, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

Our melancholy journey finishes at this town, but we retrace our steps to Florence, where, as I imagine, we shall remain some months. O that I could return to England! How heavy a weight when misfortune is added to exile, and solitude, as if the measure were not full, heaped high on both. O that I could return to England! I hear you say: 'Desire never fails to generate capacity'. Ah, but that ever-present Malthus, Necessity, has convinced Desire that even though it generated capacity, its offspring must starve. Enough of melancholy! *Nightmare Abbey*, though no cure, is a palliative. I have just received the parcel which contained it, and at the same time the *Examiners*, by the way of Malta. I am delighted with *Nightmare Abbey*. I think Scythrop a character admirably conceived and executed; and I know not how to praise sufficiently the lightness, chastity, and strength of the language of the whole. It perhaps exceeds all your works in this. The catastrophe is excellent. I suppose the moral is contained in what Falstaff says: 'For God's sake, talk like a man of this world'; and yet, looking deeper into it, is not the misdirected enthusiasm of Scythrop what J. C. calls the 'salt of the earth'? My friends the Gisbornes here admire and delight in it exceedingly. I think I told you that they (especially the lady) are people of high cultivation. She is a woman of profound accomplishments and the most refined taste.

Cobbett still more and more delights me, with all my horror of the sanguinary commonplaces of his creed. His design to overthrow bank notes by forgery is very comic. One of the volumes of Birkbeck interested me exceedingly. The letters I think stupid, but suppose that they are useful.

I do not, as usual, give you an account of my journey, for I had neither the health nor the spirit to take notes. My health was greatly improving, when watching and anxiety cast me into a relapse. The doctors (I put little faith in the best) tell me I must spend the winter in Africa or Spain. I shall of course prefer the latter, if I choose either.

Are you married, or why do I not hear from you? *That* were a good reason.

<sup>1</sup> 20th or 21st, the London postmark being July 6th. [T. L. P.]

Mary and Claire unite with me in kindest remembrances to you, and in congratulations, if she exist, to the new married lady. When shall I see you again?

Ever most faithfully yours,  
P. B. S.

Pray do not forget Mary's things.

I have not heard from you since the middle of April.

## LETTER 22

LIVORNO, July 6, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have lost some letters, and, in all probability, at least one from you, as I can account in no other manner for not having heard from you since your letter dated March 26th. . . . We have changed our design of going to Florence immediately, and are now established for three months in a little country house in a pretty verdant scene near Livorno.

I have a study here in a tower, something like Scythrop's, where I am just beginning to recover the faculties of reading and writing. My health, whenever no Libeccio blows, improves. From my tower I see the sea, with its islands, Gorgona, Capraja, Elba, and Corsica, on one side, and the Apennines on the other. Milly surprised us the other day by first discovering a comet, on which we have been speculating. She may 'make a stir, like a great astronomer'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Eyes of some men travel far  
For the finding of a star:  
Up and down the heavens they go,  
Men that make a mighty rout:  
I'm as great as they, I trow,  
Since the day I found thee out,  
Little flower! I'll make a stir,  
Like a great astronomer.

WORDSWORTH—*To the Little Celandine.*

This little flower has a very starry aspect. It is not properly a *Chelidonium*, and will not be found with that name in modern botanical works.

The *Chelidonium majus* — Celandine: Swallowwort — blossoms from April to October. It is supposed to begin and end blooming with the arrival and departure of the swallow. It belongs to the class Polyandria monogynia, and to the natural order of Papaveraceae.

*Chelidonium minus*—Little Celandine—is an obsolete name for the *Ficaria ranunculoides*: Pilewort. It blossoms from the end of February to the end of April. It is so far connected with the arrival of the swallow, that it ceases to blossom when the swallowwort begins. This probably was the reason for its being called celandine, though the plants have nothing in common. But I think, in honour of Wordsworth, its old name

The direct purpose of this letter, however, is to ask you about the box which I requested you to send to me to Naples. If it has been sent, let me entreat you (for really it is of the most serious consequence to us) to write to me by return of post, stating the name of the ship, the bill of lading, etc., so that I may get it without difficulty. If it has not been sent, do me the favour to send it instantly, direct to Livorno. If you have not the time, you can ask Hogg. If you cannot get the things from Mrs. Hunt (a possible case), send those you were to buy, and the things from Furnival,<sup>1</sup> alone. You can add what books you think fit. The last parcel I have received from you is that of last September.

All good wishes, and many hopes that you have already that success on which there will be no congratulations more cordial than those you will receive from me.

Ever most sincerely yours,  
P. B. SHELLEY.

I shall receive your letter, if written by return of post, in thirty days: a distance less formidable than Rome or Naples.

## LETTER 23

LIVORNO, July, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

We still remain, and shall remain nearly two months longer, at Livorno. Our house is a melancholy one,<sup>2</sup> and only cheered by letters from England. I got your note, in which you speak of three letters having been sent to Naples, which I have written for. I have heard also from H——,<sup>3</sup> who confirms the news of your success, an intelligence most grateful to me.

The object of the present letter is to ask a favour of you. I have written a tragedy, on the subject of a story well known in Italy, and, in my conception, eminently dramatic. I have taken some pains to make my play fit for representation, and those

should not have been entirely banished from botanical nomenclature. It might have been left, in Homeric phraseology, as the flower which men call Pilewort and Gods call Celandine. Its French name is *La Petite Chélidoine*. It belongs to the class Polyandria polygynia, and the natural order of Ranunculaceae. [T. L. P.]

<sup>1</sup> A surgeon at Egham, in whom Shelley had great confidence. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> We had lost our eldest, and at that time, only child, the preceding month at Rome. [M. S.]

<sup>3</sup> Hunt.

who have already seen it judge favourably. It is written without any of the peculiar feelings and opinions which characterize my other compositions; I having attended simply to the impartial development of such characters, as it is probable the persons represented really were, together with the greatest degree of popular effect to be produced by such a development. I send you a translation of the Italian manuscript on which my play is founded, the chief subject of which I have touched very delicately; for my principal doubt, as to whether it would succeed as an acting play, hangs entirely on the question, as to whether such a thing as incest in this shape, however treated, would be admitted on the stage. I think, however, it will form no objection: considering, first, that the facts are matter of history; and, secondly, the peculiar delicacy with which I have treated it.

I am exceedingly interested in the question of whether this attempt of mine will succeed or no. I am strongly inclined to the affirmative at present, founding my hopes on this, that, as a composition, it is certainly not inferior to any of the modern plays that have been acted, with the exception of *Remorse*; that the interest of its plot is incredibly greater and more real; and that there is nothing beyond what the multitude are contented to believe that they can understand, either in imagery, opinion, or sentiment. I wish to preserve a complete incognito, and can trust to you, that whatever else you do, you will at least favour me on this point. Indeed this is essential, deeply essential, to its success. After it had been acted, and successfully (could I hope such a thing), I would own it if I pleased, and use the celebrity it might acquire to my own purposes.

What I want you to do is, to procure for me its presentation at Covent Garden. The principal character, Beatrice, is precisely fitted for Miss O'Neill, and it might even seem written for her (God forbid that I should ever see her play it—it would tear my nerves to pieces), and, in all respects, it is fitted only for Covent Garden. The chief male character, I confess, I should be very unwilling that any one but Kean should play—that is impossible, and I must be contented with an inferior actor. I think you know some of the people of that theatre, or, at least, some one who knows them; and when you have read the play, you may say enough, perhaps, to induce them not to reject it without consideration—but of this, perhaps, if I may judge from the tragedies which they have accepted, there is no danger at any rate.

Write to me as soon as you can on this subject, because it is

necessary that I should present it, or, if rejected by the theatre, print it this coming season; lest somebody else should get hold of it, as the story, which now exists only in manuscript, begins to be generally known among the English. The translation which I send you is to be prefixed to the play, together with a print of Beatrice. I have a copy of her picture by Guido, now in the Colonna palace at Rome—the most beautiful creature you can conceive.

Of course, you will not show the manuscript to any one—and write to me by return of post, at which time the play will be ready to be sent.

I expect soon to write again, and it shall be a less selfish letter. As to Ollier, I don't know what has been published, or what has arrived at his hands. My *Prometheus*, though ready, I do not send till I know more.

Ever yours, most faithfully,

P. B. S.

#### LETTER 24

LIVORNO, August (probably 22nd), 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I ought first to say, that I have not yet received one of your letters from Naples; in Italy such things are difficult; but your present letter tells me all that I could desire to hear of your situation.

My employments are these: I awaken usually at seven; read half an hour; then get up; breakfast; after breakfast ascend *my tower*, and read or write until two. Then we dine. After dinner I read Dante with Mary, gossip a little, eat grapes and figs, sometimes walk, though seldom, and at half-past five pay a visit to Mrs. Gisborne, who reads Spanish with me until near seven. We then come for Mary, and stroll about till supper time. Mrs. Gisborne is a sufficiently amiable and very accomplished woman: she is *δημοκρατικη* and *αθη*—how far she may be *φιλανθρωπη* I don't know, for she is the antipodes of enthusiasm. Her husband, a man with little thin lips, receding forehead, and a prodigious nose, is an [ ] bore. His nose is something quite Slawkenbergian—it weighs on the imagination to look at it. It is that sort of nose which transforms all the g's its wearer utters into k's. It is a nose once seen never to be forgotten, and which requires the utmost stretch of Christian

charity to forgive. I, you know, have a little turn-up nose; Hogg has a large hook one; but add them both together, square them, cube them, you will have but a faint idea of the nose to which I refer.

I most devoutly wish I were living near London. I do not think I shall settle so far off as Richmond; and to inhabit any intermediate spot on the Thames would be to expose myself to the river damps; not to mention that it is not much to my taste. My inclinations point to Hampstead; but I do not know whether I should not make up my mind to something more completely suburban. What are mountains, trees, heaths, or even the glorious and ever-beautiful sky, with such sunsets as I have seen at Hampstead, to friends? Social enjoyment, in some form or other, is the alpha and the omega of existence. All that I see in Italy—and from my tower window I now see the magnificent peaks of the Apennine half enclosing the plain—is nothing; it dwindles into smoke in the mind, when I think of some familiar forms of scenery, little perhaps in themselves, over which old remembrances have thrown a delightful colour. How we prize what we despised when present! So the ghosts of our dead associations rise and haunt us, in revenge for our having let them starve, and abandoned them to perish.

You don't tell me if you see the Boinvilles; nor are they included in the list of the *conviti* at the monthly symposium. I will attend it in imagination.

One thing, I own, I am curious about; and in the chance of the letters not coming from Naples, pray tell me. What is it you do at the India House? Hunt writes, and says you have got a *situation* in the India House: Hogg, that you have an *honourable employment*: Godwin writes to Mary that you have got *so much or so much*: but nothing of what you do. The devil take these general terms. Not content with having driven all poetry out of the world, at length they make war on their own allies; nay, on their very parents, dry facts. If it had not been the age of generalities, any one of these people would have told me what you did.<sup>1</sup>

I have been much better these last three weeks. My work on *The Cenci*, which was done in two months, was a fine antidote to nervous medicines, and kept up, I think, the pain in my side, as

<sup>1</sup> I did my best to satisfy his curiosity on this subject; but it was in letters to Naples, which he had left before they arrived, and he never received them. I observed that this was the case with the greater portion of the letters which arrived at any town in Italy after he had left it. [T. L. P.]



sticks do a fire. Since then, I have materially improved. I do not walk enough. Clare, who is sometimes my companion, does not dress in exactly the right time. I have no stimulus to walk. Now, I go sometimes to Livorno on business; and that does me good.

England seems to be in a very disturbed state, if we may judge from some Paris papers. I suspect it is rather exaggerated; but when I hear them talk of paying in gold—nay I dare say take steps towards it, confess that the sinking fund is a fraud, etc., I no longer wonder. But the change should commence among the higher orders, or anarchy will only be the last flash before despotism.

I have been reading Calderon in Spanish. A kind of Shakespeare is this Calderon; and I have some thoughts, if I find that I cannot do anything better, of translating some of his plays.

The *Examiners* I receive. Hunt, as a political writer, pleases me more and more. Adieu. Mary and Clare send their best remembrances.

Your most faithful friend,

P. B. SHELLEY.

Pray send me some books, and Clare would take it as a great favour if you would send her *music books*.

## LETTER 25

LIVORNO, *September 9th*, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I send you the tragedy,<sup>1</sup> addressed to Stamford Street, fearing lest it might be inconvenient to receive such bulky packets at the India House. You will see that the subject has not been treated as you suggested, and why it was not susceptible of such treatment. In fact, it was then already printing when I received your letter, and it has been treated in such a manner that I do not see how the subject forms an objection. You know *Oedipus* is performed on the fastidious French stage,<sup>2</sup> a play much more

<sup>1</sup> *The Cenci*.

<sup>2</sup> The *Oedipus* of Dryden and Lee was often performed in the last century; but never in my time. There is no subject of this class treated with such infinite skill and delicacy as in Alfieri's beautiful tragedy, *Mirra*. It was the character in which Madame Ristori achieved her great success in Paris; but she was prohibited from performing it in London. If the Covent Garden managers had accepted *The Cenci*, I doubt if the licenser would have permitted the performance. [T. L. P.]

broad than this. I confess I have some hopes, and some friends here persuade me that they are not unfounded.

Many thanks for your attention in sending the papers which contain the terrible and important news of Manchester.<sup>1</sup> These are, as it were, the distant thunders of the terrible storm which is approaching. The tyrants here, as in the French Revolution, have first shed blood. May their execrable lessons not be learnt with equal facility! Pray let me have the *earliest* political news which you consider of importance at this crisis.

Yours ever most faithfully,

P. B. S.

I send this to the India House, the tragedy to Stamford Street.

## LETTER 26

LEGHORN, *September 21st*, 1819.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

You will have received a short letter sent with the tragedy, and the tragedy itself by this time. I am, you may believe, anxious to hear what you think of it, and how the manager talks about it. I have printed in Italy 250 copies, because it costs, with all duties and freightage, about half what it would cost in London, and these copies will be sent by sea. My other reason was a belief that the seeing it in print would enable the people at the theatre to judge more easily. Since I last wrote to you, Mr. Gisborne is gone to England for the purpose of obtaining a situation for Henry Reveley.<sup>2</sup> I have given him a letter to you, and you would oblige me by showing what civilities you can, and by forwarding his views, either by advice or recommendation, as you may find opportunity, not for his sake, who is a great bore, but for the sake of Mrs. Gisborne and Henry Reveley, people for whom we have a great esteem. Henry is a most amiable person, and has great talents as a mechanic and engineer. I have given him also a letter to Hunt, so that you will meet him there. Mr. Gisborne is a man who knows I cannot tell how many languages, and has read almost all the books you can think of; but all that they contain seems to be to his mind what water is to a sieve. His liberal opinions

<sup>1</sup> These papers doubtless gave an account of the Reform Meeting of August 16th, which was dispersed by government troops at the cost of half a dozen lives. The incident made a deep impression upon Shelley, who promptly wrote and sent off to Leigh Hunt his *Mask of Anarchy*.

<sup>2</sup> A son of Mrs. Gisborne by a former marriage. [T. L. P.]

are all the reflections of Mrs. G.'s, a very amiable, accomplished, and completely unprejudiced woman.

Charles Clairmont is now with us on his way to Vienna. He has spent a year or more in Spain, where he has learnt Spanish, and I make him read Spanish all day long. It is a most powerful and expressive language, and I have already learnt sufficient to read with great ease their poet Calderon. I have read about twelve of his plays. Some of them certainly deserve to be ranked among the grandest and most perfect productions of the human mind. He exceeds all modern dramatists, with the exception of Shakespeare, whom he resembles, however, in the depth of thought and subtlety of imagination of his writings, and in the rare power of interweaving delicate and powerful comic traits with the most tragical situations, without diminishing their interest. I rate him far above Beaumont and Fletcher.

I have received all the papers you sent me, and the *Examiners* regularly, perfumed with muriatic acid. What an infernal business this of Manchester! What is to be done? Something assuredly. H. Hunt has behaved, I think, with great spirit and coolness in the whole affair.

I have sent you my *Prometheus*, which I do not wish to be sent to Ollier for publication until I write to that effect. Mr. Gisborne will bring it, as also some volumes of Spenser, and the two last of Herodotus and *Paradise Lost*, which may be put with the others.

If my play should be accepted, don't you think it would excite some interest, and take off the unexpected horror of the story, by showing that the events are real, if it could be made to appear in some paper in some form?

You will hear from me again shortly, as I send you by sea *The Cenci* printed, which you will be good enough to keep. Adieu.

Yours most faithfully,

P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER 27

[Postmark, PISA, *Mr.* 25, 1820.]

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I have received your letter, and in a few days afterwards that of B—— and E—— and I enclose you theirs and my answer. . . . I have written to them a plain statement of the case, and a plain account of my situation. . . . I think by the interposition of your kind offices the affair may be arranged.

I see with deep regret in to-day's papers the attempt to assassinate the Ministry. Everything seems to conspire against Reform. How Cobbett must laugh at the 'resumption of gold payments'. I long to see him.

I have a motto on a ring in Italian: 'Il buon tempo verrà'. There is a tide both in public and in private affairs, which awaits both men and nations.

I have no news from Italy. We live here under a nominal tyranny administered according to the philosophic laws of Leopold and the mild opinions which are the fashion here. . . . Tuscany is unlike all the other Italian States, in this respect.

. . . . .

## LETTER 28

PISA, May, 1820.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I congratulate you most sincerely on your choice and on your marriage. . . . I was very much amused by your laconic account of the affair. It is altogether extremely like the *dénouement* of one of your own novels, and as such serves to<sup>1</sup> a theory I once imagined, that in everything any man ever wrote, spoke, acted, or imagined, is contained, as it were, an allegorical idea of his own future life, as the acorn contains the oak.

But not to ascend in my balloon. I have written to Hogg to ask him to pay me a visit, and though I had no hope of success, I commissioned him to endeavour to bring *you*. This becomes still more improbable from your news; but I need not say that your amiable mountaineer would make you still more welcome. My friends the Gisbornes are now really on their way to London, where they propose to stay only six weeks. I think you will like Mrs. Gisborne. Henry is an excellent fellow, but not very communicative. If you find anything in the shape of dullness or otherwise to endure in Mr. Gisborne, endure it for the lady's sake and mine; but for Heaven's sake! do not let him know that I think him stupid. Indeed, perhaps I do him an injustice,<sup>2</sup> though certainly he prosed. Hogg will find it very agreeable (if he postpones his visit so long, or if he visits me at all) to join

<sup>1</sup> H. B. F. inserts [support?]

<sup>2</sup> I think he did. I found Mr. Gisborne an agreeable and well-informed man. He and his amiable and accomplished wife have long been dead. I should not have printed what Shelley says of him if any person were living whom the remembrance could annoy. [T. L. P.]

them on their return. I wish you, and Hogg, and Hunt, and—I know not who besides—would come and spend some months with me together in this wonderful land.

We know little of England here. I take in Galignani's paper, which is filled with extracts from the *Courier*, and from those accounts it appears probable that there is but little unanimity in the mass of the people; and that a civil war impends from the success of ministers, and the exasperation of the poor.

I see my tragedy has been republished in Paris; if that is the case, it ought to sell in London; but I hear nothing from Ollier.

I have suffered extremely this winter; but I feel myself most materially better at the return of spring. I am on the whole greatly benefited by my residence in Italy, and but for certain moral causes should probably have been enabled to re-establish my system completely. Believe me, my dear Peacock, yours very sincerely,

P. B. S.

Pray make my best regards acceptable to your new companion.

#### LETTER 29

LEGHORN, July 12th, 1820.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I remember you said that when Auber married you were afraid you would see or hear but little of him. 'There are two voices,' says Wordsworth, 'one of the mountains and one of the sea, both a mighty voice.' So you have two wives—one of the mountains, all of whose claims I perfectly admit, whose displeasure I deprecate, and from whom I feel assured that I have nothing to fear: the other of the sea, the India House, who perhaps makes you write so much that I suppose you have not a scrawl to spare. I make bold to write to you on the news that you are correcting my *Prometheus*, for which I return thanks, and I send some things which may be added. I hear of you from Mr. Gisborne, but from you I do not hear. Well, how go on the funds and the Romance? <sup>1</sup> Cobbett's euthanasia seems approaching, and I suppose you will have some rough festivals at the apotheosis of the Debt.

Nothing, I think, shows the generous gullibility of the English nation more than their having adopted her Sacred Majesty as the heroine of the day, in spite of all their prejudices and bigotry.

<sup>1</sup> Presumably Peacock's *Maid Marian*.

I, for my part, of course wish no harm to happen to her, even if she has, as I firmly believe, amused herself in a manner rather indecorous with any courier or baron. But I cannot help adverting to it as one of the absurdities of royalty, that a vulgar woman, with all those low tastes which prejudice considers as vices, and a person whose habits and manners every one would shun in private life, without any redeeming virtues, should be turned into a heroine because she is a queen, or, as a collateral reason, because her husband is a king; and he, no less than his ministers, are so odious that everything, however disgusting, which is opposed to them, is admirable. The Paris paper, which I take in, copied some excellent remarks from the *Examiner* about it.

We are just now occupying the Gisbornes' house at Leghorn, and I have turned Mr. Reveley's workshop into my study. The Libecchio here howls like a chorus of fiends all day, and the weather is just pleasant—not at all hot, the days being very misty, and the nights divinely serene. I have been reading with much pleasure the Greek romances. The best of them is the pastoral of Longus: but they are all very entertaining, and would be delightful if they were less rhetorical and ornate. I am translating in *ottava rima* the *Hymn to Mercury* of Homer. Of course my stanza precludes a literal translation. My next effort will be, that it should be legible—a quality much to be desired in translations.

I am told that the magazines, etc., blaspheme me at a great rate. I wonder why I write verses, for nobody reads them. It is a kind of disorder, for which the regular practitioners prescribe what is called a torrent of abuse; but I fear that can hardly be considered as a specific. . . .

I enclose two additional poems, to be added to those printed at the end of *Prometheus*: and I send them to you, for fear Ollier might not know what to do in case he objected to some expressions in the fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas;<sup>1</sup> and that you would do me the favour to insert an asterisk, or asterisks, with as little expense of the sense as may be. The other poem I send to you, not to make two letters. I want Jones's *Greek Grammar* very much for Mary, who is deep in Greek. I thought of sending for it in sheets by the post; but as I find it would cost as much as a parcel, I would rather have a parcel, including it and some other books, which you would do me a great favour by sending by

<sup>1</sup> These were the fifteenth and sixteenth stanzas of the *Ode to Liberty*.  
[T. L. P.]

the first ship. Never send us more reviews than two back on any of Lord Byron's works, as we get them here. Ask Ollier, Mr. Gisborne, and Hunt whether they have anything to send.

Believe me, my dear Peacock,

Sincerely and affectionately yours,

P. B. S.

Jones's *Greek Grammar*; *Schrevelii Lexicon*; *The Greek Exercises*; *Melincourt*, and *Headlong Hall*; papers, and *Indicators*, and whatever else you may think interesting. Godwin's *Answer to Malthus*, if out. Six copies of the second edition of *Cenci*.

## LETTER 30

PISA, November [probably 8th], 1820.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I also delayed to answer your last letter, because I was waiting for something to say: or at least, something that should be likely to be interesting to you. The box containing my books, and consequently your Essay against the cultivation of poetry, has not arrived; my wonder, meanwhile, in what manner you support such a heresy in this matter of fact and money-loving age, holds me in suspense. Thank you for your kindness in correcting *Prometheus*, which I am afraid gave you a great deal of trouble. Among the modern things which have reached me is a volume of poems by Keats; in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called *Hyperion*. I dare say you have not time to read it; but it is certainly an astonishing piece of writing, and gives me a conception of Keats which I confess I had not before.

I hear from Mr. Gisborne that you are surrounded with statements and accounts—a chaos of which you are the God; a sepulchre which encloses in a dormant state the chrysalis of the Pavonian Psyche. May you start into life some day, and give us another *Melincourt*. Your *Melincourt* is exceedingly admired, and I think much more so than any of your other writings. In this respect the world judges rightly. There is more of the true spirit, and an object less indefinite, than in either *Headlong Hall* or *Scythrop*.

I am, speaking literally, infirm of purpose. I have great designs, and feeble hopes of ever accomplishing them. I read books, and, though I am ignorant enough, they seem to teach me nothing. To be sure, the reception the public have given

me might go far enough to damp any man's enthusiasm. They teach you, it may be said, only what is true. Very true, I doubt not, and the more true the less agreeable. I can compare my experience in this respect to nothing but a series of wet blankets. I have been reading nothing but Greek and Spanish. Plato and Calderon have been my gods. We are now in the town of Pisa. A schoolfellow of mine from India is staying with me, and we are beginning Arabic together. Mary is writing a novel, illustrative of the manners of the Middle Ages in Italy, which she has raked out of fifty old books. I promise myself success from it; and certainly, if what is wholly original will succeed, I shall not be disappointed. . . .

Adieu. *In publica cominoda peccem, si longo sermone.*

Ever faithfully yours,

P. B. SHELLEY.

### LETTER 31

PISA, February 15th, 1821.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

The last letter I received from you, nearly four months from the date thereof, reached me by the boxes which the Gisbornes sent by sea. I am happy to learn that you continue in good external and internal preservation. I received at the same time your printed denunciations against general, and your written ones against particular poetry; and I agree with you as decidedly in the latter as I differ in the former. The man whose critical gall is not stirred up by such *ottava rimas* as Barry Cornwall's, may safely be conjectured to possess no gall at all. The world is pale with the sickness of such stuff. At the same time, your anathemas against poetry itself excited me to a sacred rage, or *caloëthes*<sup>1</sup> *scribendi* of vindicating the insulted Muses. I had the greatest possible desire to break a lance with you, within the lists of a magazine, in honour of my mistress Urania; but God willed that I should be too lazy, and wrested the victory from your hope: since first having unhorsed poetry, and the universal sense of the wisest in all ages, an easy conquest would have remained to you in me, the knight of the shield of shadow and the lance of gossamere. Besides, I was at that moment reading Plato's *Ion*, which I recommend you to reconsider. Perhaps in the comparison of Platonic and Malthusian doctrines,

<sup>1</sup> Peacock printed *cacoëthes* for *caloëthes*, apparently not perceiving Shelley's joke. It is certainly *caloëthes* in the letter. [H. B. F.]



the *maius errare* of Cicero is a justifiable argument; but I have a whole quiver of arguments on such a subject.

Have you seen Godwin's answer to the apostle of the rich?<sup>1</sup> And what do you think of it? It has not yet reached me, nor has your box, of which I am in daily expectation.

We are now in the crisis and point of expectation in Italy. The Neapolitan and Austrian armies are rapidly approaching each other, and every day the news of a battle may be expected. The former have advanced into the Ecclesiastical States, and taken hostages from Rome to assure themselves of the neutrality of that power, and appear determined to try their strength in open battle. I need not tell you how little chance there is that the new and undisciplined levies of Naples should stand against a superior force of veteran troops. But the birth of liberty in nations abounds in examples of a reversal of the ordinary laws of calculation: the defeat of the Austrians would be the signal of insurrection throughout all Italy.

I am devising literary plans of some magnitude. But nothing is more difficult and unwelcome than to write without a confidence of finding readers; and if my play of *The Cenci* found none or few, I despair of ever producing anything that shall merit them.

Among your anathemas of the modern attempts in poetry, do you include Keats's *Hyperion*? I think it very fine. His other poems are worth little; but if the *Hyperion* be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries.

I suppose *you* are writing nothing but Indian laws, etc. I have but a faint idea of your occupation; but I suppose it has much to do with pen and ink.

Mary desires to be kindly remembered to you; and I remain, my dear Peacock, yours very faithfully,

P. B. SHELLEY.

## LETTER 32

PISA, March 21st, 1821.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I dispatch by this post the first part of an essay intended to consist of three parts, which I design for an antidote to your *Four Ages of Poetry*.<sup>2</sup> You see will that I have taken a more

<sup>1</sup> Godwin's treatise *Of Population*, in answer to Malthus.

<sup>2</sup> The *Four Ages of Poetry* here alluded to was published in Ollier's *Literary Miscellany*. Shelley wrote the *Defence of Poetry* as an answer to it; and as he wrote it, it contained many allusions to the article and its author, such as 'If I know the knight by the device of his shield, I have

general view of what is poetry than you have, and will perhaps agree with several of my positions, without considering your own touched. But read and judge; and do not let us imitate the great founders of the picturesque, Price and Payne Knight, who, like two ill-trained beagles, began snarling at each other when they could not catch the hare.

I hear the welcome news of a box from England announced by Mr. Gisborne. How much new poetry does it contain? The Bavii and Maevii of the day are very fertile; and I wish those who honour me with boxes would read and inwardly digest your *Four Ages of Poetry*; for I had much rather, for my own private reading, receive political, geological, and moral treatises, than this stuff in *tersa*, *ottava*, and *tremillesima rima* whose earthly baseness has attracted the lightning of your indiscriminating censure upon the temple of immortal song. Procter's verses enrage me far more than those of Codrus did Juvenal, and with better reason. Juvenal need not have been stunned unless he had liked it; but my boxes are packed with this trash, to the exclusion of what I want to see. But your box will make amends.

Do you see much of Hogg now? and the Boinvilles and Colson? Hunt I suppose not. And are you occupied as much as ever? We are surrounded here in Pisa by revolutionary volcanoes, which, as yet, give more light than heat: the lava has not yet reached Tuscany. But the news in the papers will tell you far more than it is prudent for me to say; and for this once I will observe your rule of political silence. The Austrians wish that the Neapolitans and Piedmontese would do the same.

We have seen a few more people than usual this winter, and have made a very interesting acquaintance with a Greek Prince, perfectly acquainted with ancient literature, and full of enthusiasm for the liberties and improvement of his country. Mary has been a Greek student for several months, and is reading *Antigone* with our turbaned friend, who, in return, is taught English. Claire has passed the carnival at Florence, and has been preternaturally gay. I have had a severe ophthalmia, only to inscribe Cassandra, Antigone, or Alcestis on mine to blunt the point of his spear'; taking one instance of a favourite character from each of the three great Greek tragedians. All these allusions were struck out by Mr. John Hunt when he prepared the paper for publication in the *Liberal*. The demise of that periodical prevented the publication, and Mrs. Shelley subsequently printed it from Mr. Hunt's *rifaccimento*, as she received it. The paper as it now stands is a defence without an attack. Shelley intended this paper to be in three parts, but the other two were not written. [T. L. P.]

and have read or written little this winter; and have made acquaintance in an obscure convent with the only Italian for whom I ever felt any interest.<sup>1</sup>

I want you to do something for me: that is, to get me two pounds' worth of Tassi's gems, in Leicester Square, the prettiest, according to your taste; among them, the head of Alexander; and to get me two seals engraved and set, one smaller, and the other handsomer; the device a dove with outspread wings, and this motto round it:

*Μάντις εἰμ' ἐσθλῶν ἀγώνων.*

Mary desires her best regards;<sup>2</sup> and I remain, my dear Peacock, ever most sincerely yours,

P. B. S.

### LETTER 33

RAVENNA, August [probably 10th], 1821.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I received your last letter just as I was setting off from the Bagni on a visit to Lord Byron at this place. Many thanks for all your kind attention to my accursed affairs. . . .

I have sent you by the Gisbornes a copy of the *Elegy on Keats*. The subject, I know, will not please you; but the composition of the poetry, and the taste in which it is written, I do not think bad. You and the enlightened public will judge. Lord

<sup>1</sup> Lady Emilia Viviani, the subject of his *Epipsychidion*. She was the daughter of an Italian count, who shut her up in a convent till he could find for her a husband to his own taste. It was there Shelley became acquainted with her. He was struck by the beauty of her person, the graces of her mind, the misery of her imprisonment in dismal society. He took for the motto of his poem her own words, *L'anima amante si slancia fuori del creato, e si crea nell' infinito un mondo tutto per essa, diverso assai da questo oscuro e pauroso baratro*. 'She was subsequently married to a gentleman chosen for her by her father, and after pining in his society, and in the marshy solitudes of the Maremma, for six years, she left him, with the consent of her parent, and died of consumption, in a dilapidated old mansion at Florence.'—*Shelley Memorials*, p. 149. Though she was not killed by her husband, her fate always recalls to me the verses of Dante:

Ricordati di me, che son la Pia:  
Siena mi fe', disfecemi Maremma:  
Salsi colui che innanellata pria  
Disponando m'avea con la sua gemma.

*Purgatorio*, v 133-6. [T. L. P.]

<sup>2</sup> There is a postscript from Mrs. Shelley, asking me to execute one or two small commissions, and adding:

'Am I not lucky to have got so good a master? I have finished the two plays of *Oedipus*, and am now reading the *Antigone*. The name of the prince is Ἀλέξανδρος Μαυροκρόδατος. He can read English perfectly well. [T. L. P.]

Byron is in excellent cue both of health and spirits. He has got rid of all those melancholy and degrading habits which he indulged at Venice. He lives with one woman, a lady of rank here, to whom he is attached, and who is attached to him, and is in every respect an altered man. He has written three more cantos of *Don Juan*. I have yet only heard the fifth, and I think that every word of it is pregnant with immortality. I have not seen his late plays, except *Marino Faliero*, which is very well, but not so transcendently fine as *Don Juan*. Lord Byron gets up at two. I get up, quite contrary to my usual custom (but one must sleep or die, like Southey's sea-snake in *Kehama*), at twelve. After breakfast, we sit talking till six. From six till eight we gallop through the pine forests which divide Ravenna from the sea; we then come home and dine, and sit up gossiping till six in the morning. I don't suppose this will kill me in a week or fortnight, but I shall not try it longer. Lord B.'s establishment consists, besides servants, of ten horses, eight enormous dogs, three monkeys, five cats, an eagle, a crow, and a falcon; and all these, except the horses, walk about the house, which every now and then resounds with their unarbitrated quarrels, as if they were the masters of it. Lord B. thinks you wrote a pamphlet signed *John Bull*; he says he knew it by the style resembling *Melincourt*, of which he is a great admirer. I read it, and assured him that it could not possibly be yours.<sup>1</sup> I write nothing, and probably shall write no more. It offends me to see my name classed among those who have no name. If I cannot be something better, I had rather be nothing . . . and the accursed cause to the downfall of which I dedicated what powers I may have had—flourishes like a cedar and covers England with its boughs. My motive was never the infirm desire of fame; and if I should continue an author, I feel that I should desire it. This cup is justly given to one only of an age; indeed, participation would make it worthless: and unfortunate they who seek it and find it not.

<sup>1</sup> Most probably Shelley's partiality for me and my book put too favourable a construction on what Lord Byron may have said. Lord Byron told Captain Medwin that a friend of Shelley's had written a novel, of which he had forgotten the name, founded on his bear. He described it sufficiently to identify it, and Captain Medwin supplied the title in a note: but assuredly, when I condensed Lord Monboddo's views of the humanity of the Oran Outang into the character of *Sir Oran Haut-ton*, I thought neither of Lord Byron's bear nor of Caligula's horse. But Lord Byron was much in the habit of fancying that all the world was spinning on his pivot. As to the pamphlet signed *John Bull*, I certainly did not write it. I never even saw it, and do not know what it was about. [T. L. P.]

I congratulate you—I hope I ought to do so—on your expected stranger. He is introduced into a rough world. My regards to Hogg, and Colson if you see him.

Ever most faithfully yours,  
P. B. S.

After I have sealed my letter, I find that my enumeration of the animals in this Circean Palace was defective, and that in a material point. I have just met on the grand staircase five peacocks, two guinea-hens, and an Egyptian crane. I wonder who all these animals were, before they were changed into these shapes.

## LETTER 34

PISA, January [probably 11th], 1822.

MY DEAR PEACOCK,

I am still at Pisa, where I have at length fitted up some rooms at the top of a lofty palace that overlooks the city and the surrounding region, and have collected books and plants about me, and established myself for some indefinite time, which, if I read the future, will not be short. I wish you to send my books by the very first opportunity, and I expect in them a great augmentation of comfort. Lord Byron is established here, and we are constant companions. No small relief this, after the dreary solitude of the understanding and the imagination in which we past the first years of our expatriation, yoked to all sorts of miseries and discomforts.

Of course you have seen his last volume, and if you before thought him a great poet, what is your opinion now that you have read *Cain*! The *Foscari* and *Sardanapalus* I have not seen; but as they are in the style of his later writings, I doubt not they are very fine. We expect Hunt here every day, and remain in great anxiety on account of the heavy gales which he must have encountered at Christmas.<sup>1</sup> Lord Byron has fitted

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hunt and his family were to have embarked for Italy in September 1821; but the vessel was delayed till the 16th of November. They were detained three weeks by bad weather at Ramsgate, and were beaten up and down channel till the 22nd of December, when they put in at Dartmouth. Mrs. Hunt being too ill to proceed, they went to Plymouth, resumed their voyage in another vessel on the 13th of May, 1822, and arrived at Leghorn about the end of June, having been nine months from the time of their engagement with the first vessel in finding their way to Italy. In the present days of railways and steam navigation, this reads like a modern version of the return of Ulysses. [T. L. P.]

up the lower apartments of his palace for him, and Hunt will be agreeably surprised to find a commodious lodging prepared for him after the fatigues and dangers of his passage. I have been long idle, and, as far as writing goes, despondent; but I am now engaged on *Charles the First*, and a devil of a nut it is to crack.

Mary and Clara (who is not with us just at present) are well, and so is our little boy, the image of poor William. We live as usual, tranquilly. I get up, or at least wake early; read and write till two; dine; go to Lord B.'s, and ride, or play billiards, as the weather permits; and sacrifice the evening either to light books or whoever happens to drop in. Our furniture, which is very neat, cost fewer shillings than that at Marlow did pounds sterling; and our windows are full of plants, which turn the sunny winter into spring. My health is better—my cares are lighter; and although nothing will cure the consumption of my purse, yet it drags on a sort of life in death, very like its master, and seems, like Fortunatus's, always empty yet never quite exhausted. You will have seen my *Adonais* and perhaps my *Hellas*, and I think, whatever you may judge of the subject, the composition of the first poem will not wholly displease you. I wish I had something better to do than furnish this jingling food for the hunger of oblivion, called verse, but I have not; and since you give me no encouragement about India<sup>1</sup> I cannot hope to have.

How is your little star, and the heaven which contains the milky way in which it glimmers?

Adieu.—Yours ever, most truly,

S.

[The following extract, which forms the conclusion of a letter to him from Mrs. Shelley, was printed by Peacock at the end of Shelley's letters. It was dated,]

GENOA, Sept. 29th, 1822.

I have written you a letter entirely about business. When I hold my pen in my hand, my natural impulse is to express the feelings that overwhelm me; but resisting that impulse, I dare not for a moment stray from my subject, or I should never find it again. . . . Alas, find in the whole world so transcendent a being as mine own Shelley, and then tell me to be consoled!

<sup>1</sup> He had expressed a desire to be employed politically at the court of a native prince, and I had told him that such employment was restricted to the regular service of the East India Company. [T. L. P.]

And it is not he alone I have lost, though that misery, swallowing up all others, has hitherto made me forgetful of all others. My best friend, my dear Edward,<sup>1</sup> whom next to S. I loved, and whose virtues were worthy of the warmest affection, he too is gone! Jane (i.e. Mrs. Williams), driven by her cruel fate to England, has also deserted me. What have I left? Not one that can console me; not one that does not show by comparison how deep and irremediable my losses are. Trelawny is the only quite disinterested friend I have here—the only one who clings to the memory of my loved ones as I do myself; but he, alas, is not as one of them, though he is really good and kind. Adieu, my dear Peacock; be happy with your wife and child. I hear that the first is deserving of every happiness, and the second a most interesting little creature. I am glad to hear this. Desolate as I am, I cling to the idea that some of my friends at least are not like me. Again, adieu.

Your attached friend,

MARY W. SHELLEY.

Captain Williams, who was drowned with Shelley. [T. L. P.]





# INDEX

[Unless it is clear to the contrary, all references have a direct reference to Shelley]

- Address to the Irish People*, i, 311, 317, 326  
*Adonais (Elegy on Keats)*, ii, 459, 462  
*Ahasuerus, the Wandering Jew*, fragment of story by Shelley, i, 122-3  
*Alastor*, ii, 341, 379  
 Alnwick Castle, i, 271  
 Architecture, i, 76, 279  
*Ariel*, the boat, origin of the idea, ii, 201; building of, 207; its arrival and first sailings, 208-10; the last voyage, 215-16; recovery of the wreck, 229-30; Peacock's comments, 355-8  
*Ariosto*, ii, 63, 396, 403  
*Aristotle*, i, 70, 163  
 Art, i, 279  
 Arve, River, ii, 381-3  
 'Atheist, Shelley the', i, 91; ii, 190  
 Bacon, Sir Francis, ii, 199  
 Bagley Wood, i, 82  
 Bagni di Lucca, ii, 395  
 Barruel, Abbé, author of *History of Jacobinism*, i, 376  
 Berkeley, George, divine, i, 354  
 Bible, The, ii, 154  
 Bisham Wood, ii, 345, 347, 433  
 Bishopgate, ii, 340 fol., 378  
 Boats, Shelley's habit of making paper-, i, 62-3; ii, 339-40  
 Boinville, Madame de, and her daughter Cornelia, ii, 63-5, 133, 136, 145, 325-6, 360, 439  
 Bologna, ii, 405  
 Bonneville, ii, 381  
 Bossons, glacier of, ii, 384-5  
 Botany, Shelley's limited knowledge of, i, 76  
 Bracknell, ii, 108 fol., 133 fol.  
 Brown, Charles Brockden, American novelist, ii, 327-8  
 Buffon, the naturalist, i, 263; ii, 386  
 Byron, Lord, on Shelley, i, 130; ii, 168, 180-1, 192; meets Shelley, ii, 344; estrangement with Shelley, ii, 212, 354; residence at Pisa, ii, 174; appearance, ii, 175; conversation, ii, 179; diet, ii, 182-5; moves to Monte Nero, ii, 211; follows Shelley's boat in the *Bohvar*, ii, 215; present at cremation of Shelley, ii, 221; project of going to Greece, ii, 236, death at Missolonghi, ii, 265. *Other references involving Shelley*: i, 179; ii, 169, 187, 188, 204, 212, 232, 399, 413, 461  
*Calderon*, ii, 172, 352-3, 449, 451  
 Castlereagh, Lord, Shelley's hatred of, i, 380, 420  
*Cenci, The*, ii, 198, 228, 351, 445, 449 (and note), 453  
 Chamonix, ii, 383  
*Charles the First*, ii, 462  
 Chatterton, Thomas, i, 160  
 Chemistry, i, 36, 49, 57, 156-7  
 Chess, Shelley as a player of, ii, 37  
 Children, Shelley's regard for, i, 142-5  
 Chillon, Castle of, ii, 374  
 Christians and Christianity, i, 220  
 Cicero, ii, 118  
 Clairmont, Charles, ii, 451  
 Clairmont, Claire, ii, 387, 395, 449, 462; her child *Allegra*, ii, 357  
 Clarens, ii, 375  
 Cluses, ii, 381  
 Cobbett, William, ii, 389, 420, 426, 441, 443, 452, 453  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, i, 299; ii, 203, 379  
 Como, Lake, ii, 390, 394  
 'Cornwall, Barry' (Bryan Waller Procter), ii, 456  
 Correggio, ii, 406  
 Cottin, Madame, authoress, i, 263  
 Covent Garden, i, 151  
 Curran, John Philpot, Irish judge and politician, i, 318, 327, 332, 337-8, 341  
 Cwm Elan, i, 224-9; ii, 156-7  
 Dante, ii, 430  
 D'Arblay, Madame (Fanny Burney), ii, 73-5

- Darwin, Erasmus, i, 229  
 Davy, Sir Humphry, i, 357  
*Defence of Poetry*, ii, 457 (and note)  
 Deism, i, 216; ii, 119  
*Don Juan*, the boat (*see Ariel*, the)  
 Drummond, Sir William, i, 373; ii, 442 n.  
 Dublin, i, 316 fol., 386 fol., 413-15  
 Eaton, Daniel Isaac, bookseller, indicted for selling Paine's *Rights of Man*, i, 345, 380; ii, 128  
 Edinburgh, i, 246 fol.; ii, 115 fol.  
 Eldon, first Earl of, unpopularity at Oxford, i, 156; Shelley's abhorrence of, ii, 312, 326; his decree against Shelley, ii, 346-7  
*Elegy on Keats*, ii, 459 *See also Adonais*  
 Ellenborough, Lord, i, 380; ii, 128, 147  
 Epicurus, i, 220  
*Epipsychidion*, ii, 459 n.  
*Essay on Love*, i, 309  
 Este, ii, 401  
 Eton, i, 33-43, 91; ii, 311-13  
 Euclid, i, 70, 75  
 Evian, ii, 371  
 Ferrara, ii, 402  
 Field Place, i, 19; ii, 151  
 Florence, 'atheist' incident at, ii, 354  
 Flowers, Shelley's neglect of, i, 76  
 French Revolution, Shelley and the, ii, 76  
 Garnett, Richard, article on Shelley quoted and disputed by Peacock, 360-5  
 Geneva, ii, 367  
 German language, Shelley's knowledge of, i, 370  
 Gibbon, Edward, his house at Lausanne, and Shelley's musings, ii, 377  
 Gisborne, Mr. and Mrs., ii, 394, 443, 447, 452 (and note)  
 Godwin, Fanny (*see Imlay*, Fanny)  
 Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft, i, 357  
 Godwin, William, i, 303 fol., 318-33, 348-56, 359-60; ii, 37, 98 fol., 153, 203  
 Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter*, Shelley adds to it, ii, 121-6  
 Greek, Shelley's wide reading in, i, 86  
 Grenville, Lord, i, 155  
 Grove, Charles H., brother of Harriet Grove, i, 32; ii, 154-8  
 Grove, Harriet, i, 27-8, 96, 100, 213, 230; ii, 154-5, 317  
 Grove, John, Shelley's uncle, i, 213  
 Guercino, painter, ii, 408-9  
 Guido, paintings by him at Bologna, ii, 406-9  
 Half Moon Street, London, ii, 5, 26, 68  
 Hampstead, Berkshire, ii, 142, 351, 448  
 Hartley, David, philosopher, i, 357  
*Hellas*, ii, 200, 462  
 Héloïse (Eloisa), lover of Abelard, i, 213, 241  
 Helvétius, Claude Adrien, French philosopher, i, 354-5  
 Hemans, Mrs., i, 26, 228  
 Hermance, ii, 370  
*History of a Six Weeks' Tour through France, Switzerland, Germany, and Holland*, ii, 338, 367  
 Hitchener, Elizabeth, i, 379; ii, 55-8  
 Hogg, John, father of T. J. Hogg, i, 186 fol., 269  
 Hogg, Thomas Jefferson, boyhood reminiscences, i, 37, 39; meets Shelley, i, 46; his poetry, i, 95 walking tour to Stonehenge, i, 112; leaves Oxford with Shelley, i, 172; leaves Shelley for York, i, 197; joins Shelley in Edinburgh, i, 253; returns to York, i, 270; comes to the Temple London, i, 362; fruitless visit to Ireland to find Shelley, i, 392-415 mistaken for Shelley, ii, 50; detail of his legal apprenticeship, ii, 129 his novel, *The Memoirs of Prince Alexy Haimatoff*, ii, 118  
 Holcroft, Thomas, i, 271  
 Homer, Shelley's delight in reading, ii, 59, 118  
 Hume, David, i, 71, 163, 164; ii, 111  
 Hunt, Leigh, i, 374-5, 377; ii, 203, 211, 221, 225, 345, 356, 461  
 Imlay, Fanny, daughter of Mary Godwin, i, 351; ii, 317-18, 320  
 Immortality, Shelley on, i, 190  
 India, Shelley's wish to go to, ii, 46  
 Ireland, William Henry, forger, i, 16  
 Italians, Shelley's criticisms of them, ii, 393, 395  
 Jura Mountains, ii, 368  
 Kant, i, 372; ii, 27  
 Keate, Dr., headmaster of Eton College, i, 42

- Keats, ii, 203, 217, 455, 457  
 Kensington Gardens, i, 63, 180  
 Keswick, i, 282 fol.  
 Killarney, i, 403, 414; ii, 1
- Landor, Walter Savage, i, 127  
 Laplace, Marquis de, French scientist, ii, 118  
 Latin, language, i, 356; Shelley's compositions in, i, 133-4  
 Lausanne, ii, 377  
 Lawrence, Chevalier, author of *The Empire of the Nairs*, ii, 28  
 Lawyers, Shelley's dislike of, ii, 132  
 Learning and genius, Shelley's admiration for men of, i, 149  
 Lechlade, ii, 340-1  
 Leghorn (Livorno), ii, 200, 212, 354, 357, 394, 443-9  
 Lerici, ii, 205, 240  
*Letter to Lord Ellenborough*, ii, 128  
 Lewis, Matthew Gregory, i, 26  
 Liberty, i, 128, 154  
 Lind, Dr. James, i, 17, 35, 92, 93; ii, 313  
*Lines on the Euganean Hills*, ii, 441  
 Locke, John, the philosopher, i, 71, 163; ii, 118  
 London, i, 177 fol.  
 Lymouth (Lymouth), i, 346 fol.
- Madocks of Tremadoc, the, i, 367-8  
 Malthus, Thomas Robert, i, 325, 401, 457 (and note)  
 Marlow, ii, 344-9, 364, 390, 392  
 Marriage, i, 239-41  
*Mask of Anarchy*, ii, 450 n.  
 Mathematics, i, 52, 75  
 Mavrocordato, Prince Alexander, ii, 458  
 Medwin, Thomas, ii, 167, 309, 312  
 Meillerie, ii, 372  
 Metaphysics, i, 52  
 Michael Angelo's 'Day of Judgment', ii, 430-1  
 Milan, ii, 389, 391  
 Milton, i, 357  
 Mirabaud, author of *La Systême de la Nature*, i, 343, 354, 358  
 Montalegre, ii, 369, 377  
 Montanvert, glacier of, ii, 386-7, 412  
 Mont Blanc, ii, 383  
 Morgan, Lady Sydney (see Owenson)  
 Mozart, Shelley's delight in his music, ii, 330  
 Music, Shelley's love of, i, 32; ii, 154, 188, 330
- Nant-Gwilt, i, 340 fol.; ii, 321 n.  
 Naples, ii, 415, 419  
 Napoleon I, Shelley's dislike of, i, 380  
*Necessity of Atheism, The*, i, 163 fol.  
 Newton family, ii, 14-17, 69, 111, 324, 441  
 Nicholson, Margaret, the mad, would-be assassin of George III, i, 160  
 Norfolk, Duke of, i, 288, 380; ii, 5, 156
- Ode to Liberty*, ii, 454 n.  
 Ollier, Charles, publisher, ii, 345, 365, 447  
 Opera, Shelley's visits to, ii, 330, 349, 389  
 Ouchy, ii, 376-7  
 Owenson, Sydney (Lady Sydney Morgan), i, 229, 231, 237  
 Oxford, i, 44 fol., 67  
 Oxford, Earl of, and Countess of, ii, 6, 8
- Paley, William, i, 184, 187  
 Peacock, Thomas Love, ii, 203; meets Shelley, ii, 323  
 Pesto, ii, 428  
 Peterloo Massacre, ii, 450  
 Pilfold, Captain, Shelley's uncle, i, 202, 204, 219, 269, 270  
 Pisa, ii, 171, 194, 212, 254-5, 452-61  
 Pistols and pistol-shooting, i, 60-1  
 Plato, i, 73, 121, 147; ii, 199, 456  
 Pliny, i, 33  
 Plumer, Sir Thomas, ii, 81  
 Poland Street, London, i, 178 fol.  
 Politics, i, 129-30, 132, 154; ii, 156, 389  
 Pompeii, ii, 421-5  
*Posthumous Fragments of Margaret Nicholson*, i, 158  
*Prometheus Unbound*, ii, 198, 401, 421, 441, 447, 451, 455  
*Proposals for an Association of Philanthropists, etc.*, i, 317
- Queen Mab*, i, 25, 357, 373, 382-3; ii, 44 fol.
- Raphael's 'St. Cecilia', ii, 408  
*Refutation of Deism*, ii, 119  
*Revolt of Islam, The*, i, 17; ii, 345, 364  
 Rimuni, ii, 411  
 Roberts, Daniel, ii, 164, 170, 205 fol., 229  
 Rome, ii, 410, 414-15, 432-40  
*Rosalind and Helen*, ii, 398, 441  
 Rousseau, Jean Jacques, ii, 374

Sackville Street, London, i, 227

*St. Irvyne*, i, 95, 305, 325

St. Martin, ii, 382

Salerno, ii, 428-9

Science, physical, i, 49-52

Servoz, ii, 382

Shakespeare, ii, 196, 198, 199, 226, 352

Sharp, Granville, philanthropist, his likeness to Shelley, ii, 52-3

Shelley, Sir Bysshe, Shelley's grandfather, i, 92, 296

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, childhood, i, 19-31; Eton life, i, 33-43; Oxford life, i, 44-172; leaves Oxford for Poland St., London, i, 172; elopes with Harriet Westbrook, i, 247; moves from Edinburgh to Keswick, i, 281; corresponds with Godwin, i, 304 fol.; leaves for Dublin, i, 316; crosses to Nant-Gwilt, i, 338; to Lymouth, i, 346; to Tanyrallt, i, 367; corresponds with Leigh Hunt, i, 377; second visit to Ireland, i, 386-415; London again, ii, 1; publication of *Queen Mab*, ii, 44; first child born, ii, 106; moves to Bracknell, ii, 108; leaves Bracknell for Edinburgh, ii, 116; leaves England with Mary Godwin, ii, 338, and returns to take up residence at Bishopgate, where he meets Peacock, ii, 340; second visit to Switzerland, meets Lord Byron, and returns to live at Great Marlow, ii, 344, 367-88; leaves England for last time, ii, 349; Italian travels, ii, 389-462; last days and death, ii, 167-219. *Other references*: appearance, i, 47, 194; ii, 83; awkwardness, i, 145; charity and humanity, i, 82, 141, 150; company, his dislike of, ii, 196, 348; his *Credo*, i, 315; ii, 105; delusions, ii, 38, 326, 341, 354, 356, 364; diet, i, 87-9, 146, 257; ii, 31, 81-91, 329; discouragements, ii, 186; moral sense, i, 81; suicide, contemplation of, ii, 209, 336; voice, i, 32; ii, 315.

Prose and poetry published in Hogg for the first time: *Verses on a Cat*, i, 29; prose fragment of an *Essay on Friendship*, i, 30; *On an icicle that clung to the grass of a grave*, i, 103; prose fragment from *The Wandering Jew*, i, 123; *A*

*Dialogue*, i, 124; *To Death*, i, 124; *Bigotry's Victim*, i, 207; *Love*, i, 214; *To the Moonbeam*, i, 221; *To a Star*, i, 231; *Love's Rose*, i, 232; fragment of a novel as a supplement to Goethe's *Sorrows of Werter*, ii, 121-6; *At Bracknell*, ii, 136 (the titles given are those used in the *Everyman* edition)

For Shelley's views see various subjects

Shelley, Charles Bysshe, Shelley's second child by Harriet, ii, 363

Shelley, Clara, Shelley's daughter, who died in 1818, ii, 350, 399

Shelley, Elizabeth, the mother of Shelley, i, 19, 106, 223

Shelley, Elizabeth, sister to Shelley, i, 19, 97 fol., 206, 222, 228, 231, 236, 242; ii, 153

Shelley, Harriet, appearance, i, 32; ii, 338; throws herself on Shelley's protection, i, 227; elopes, i, 247; her culture, i, 264; ii, 338; habit of reading aloud, i, 265, 271; ii, 27, 128; the spelling of her name, i, 385; suicidal leanings, i, 280; ii, 12, 133; undomesticity, ii, 30; gives birth to first child, ii, 106; Peacock's views on her separation from Shelley, ii, 332-5, 360-5; Peacock's estimate of her, ii, 338; her suicide, ii, 344. *Other references*: i, 203, 219, 226, 233, 242, 245, 270; ii, 3, 155, 320, 348

Shelley, Hellen, sister to Shelley, i, 19, 21-33, 179, 197, 233

Shelley, Ianthe Eliza, Shelley's first child, ii, 68, 106, 115, 132, 136, 323

Shelley, John, Shelley's uncle, ii, 105

Shelley, Mary, sister to Shelley, i, 19; ii, 155

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft, i, 7, 14; ii, 148, 172-3, 196, 218, 332 fol., 360-5, 462-3

Shelley, Sir Percy, Shelley's son, ii, 332, 351, 462

Shelley, Timothy, father of Shelley, i, 7, 19, 94, 182 fol., 195, 217, 269; ii, 6, 105

Shelley, William, Shelley's son, who died in 1819, ii, 350, 442

*Shelley Memorials*, edited by Lady Shelley, quoted, ii, 332 fol., 357

*Shelley Papers*, by T. J. Hogg, i, 9  
*Sheridan's School for Scandal*, Shelley's criticism of, ii, 330

- Shotover Hill, i, 62  
 Smith, Horatio and James, authors  
   of *Rejected Addresses*, ii, 203, 426  
 Socrates, i, 59  
 Soldiers, Shelley's dislike of, ii, 156  
 Solitude, i, 216  
 Sophocles, Shelley's favourite Greek  
   dramatist, ii, 196  
 Southey, Robert, i, 246, 289, 292,  
   309, 344; ii, 203, 337  
 Spezzia, Gulf of, ii, 204 fol.  
 Spinoza, i, 108  
 Spoleto, ii, 411  
 Stockdale, the publisher of *St.*  
   *Ireynne*, i, 94-5, 110  
 Susa, triumphal arch at, ii, 389  
 Swimming, Shelley's attempts at,  
   ii, 189-90, 204  
*Symposium*, Shelley's translation of  
   the, ii, 396, 398  
  
 Tacitus, ii, 118  
 Tanyralit, i, 369 fol., 386 fol.  
 Tasso, ii, 62, 404  
 Taylor, Thomas, the Platonist, i, 121  
 Terni, ii, 411, 412  
 Theatres, Shelley's prejudice against,  
   ii, 330  
 Trelawny, Edward John, hears of  
   Shelley, ii, 163, meets Shelley,  
   ii, 172; plans the fatal arrange-  
   ments, ii, 203 fol.; superintends  
   the last ceremonies, ii, 217 fol.;  
   leaves with Byron for Greece, ii,  
   244  
  
 Tremadoc, i, 367-8  
*Triumph of Life, The*, ii, 356  
  
 Venice, ii, 400  
 Vesuvius, ii, 418  
 Vevai, ii, 369, 376  
 Villa Magna, Shelley's last residence,  
   ii, 205, 240  
 Virginia Water, ii, 339, 397  
 Vivian, Charles, sailor-boy on the  
   *Ariel*, ii, 207, 210, 217  
 Viviani, Lady Emilia, ii, 459 (and  
   note)  
 Voltaire, i, 182, 215  
  
*Wandering Jew, The*, fragment of  
   story by Shelley, i, 122-3  
 Warburton, William, divine, i, 217  
 Warnham Church, i, 36  
 Westbrook, 'Jew', Harriet's father,  
   i, 205, 236, 270  
 Westbrook, Eliza, i, 203, 215, 217,  
   219, 233, 273-5, 331, 414; ii, 2,  
   107, 115, 136, 336  
 Wieland, Christoph Martin, German  
   author, ii, 144  
 Williams, Edward Ellerker, ii, 167,  
   171, 206 fol., 212, 217, 220, 463  
 Woman, i, 79, 181  
 Wordsworth, William, on Shelley,  
   ii, 165-6, 203, 328, 339  
  
 York, i, 271-3, 279  
 Yvoire, ii, 370  
  
*Zastrozzi*, i, 305, 325